MARVEL MASTERWORKS®

THE FANTASTIC FOUR®

VOLUME 12

THE FANTASTIC FOUR Nos. 117-128

STAN LEE, ROY THOMAS & JOHN BUSCEMA

MARVEL

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PRESENTS

THE Fantastic FOUR

VOLUME 12

COLLECTING

THE FANTASTIC FOUR Nos. 117-128

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THE
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Nos. 117-128

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PREFACE
BY STAN LEE

Hi, Heroes,

Are you any good at riddles? Here's our chance to find out.

First, a little background…when I least expected it, along came an e-mail from *Marvel Masterworks* mighty editor, Cory Sedlmeier, asking if I'd write the preface to this destined-to-be-an-instant-classic collection.

Cory also wrote that rascally Roy Thomas would accompany my preface with an introduction.

"So what's the riddle?" you ask. Glad you're still with me. Here it is…

For more years than I can remember I've been writing "prefaces" and "forwards" and "introductions" to various books; and the riddle is—*What in the name of Irving Forbush is the difference between a "preface" and a "forward" and an "introduction?* I'm asking you because I don't have the foggiest idea!

Since we don't have time to wait for your answer, I'll just dive right in, write whatever I can and call it a preface. Although it would be kind'a funny if Roy doesn't know the difference, either. He might end up writing the same thing as me. I tell ya, this book is destined to be a real collectors' item!

Now I'll confess why I laid that riddle bit on you. Mainly, it's because it was the last thing you'd expect to read in a so-called Preface. And that's my not-so-subtle way of segueing into the one element I tried to add to every *Fantastic Four* story I wrote or edited. That element is the element of—surprise!

It was always vitally important to me to present to the reader situations that he or she hadn't expected, and then to create unusual, life-and-death problems for our heroes and have them ultimately solved in ways that the reader might never have anticipated.

Of course, surprises are just one of the many things that we at Marvel so generously tried to bestow upon you. Perhaps the most important thing we gifted you with was (and still is) our choice of artists. Starting with the truly great Jack Kirby, I was the luckiest writer in the world to work with a guy who made everything I wrote look even better than I could have ever hoped for.

And then, after we had done an unbroken series of 102 issues, which was some sort of a record at that time, Marvel's luck still held because the artwork was next handled by the Jazzy One John Romita for a short time before another of comicdom's greats jumped in, the man known as an artist's artist, Big John Buscema.

But our lucky streak didn't stop there. Archie Goodwin, one of the Bullpen's rising stars, had filled in for me, keeping the FF rolling month in and month out while I worked on Alain Renais' film, *The Monster Maker*. I couldn't stay away long, though, and I was back writing Reed and the gang's adventure in no time. When I became Marvel's publisher and no longer had time to continue writing the series, Fate smiled down at us in the person of a true Marvel legend, Roy Thomas, who not only carried on the great FF tradition but brought to it many new and brilliant innovations that I turned Hulk-green with envy whenever I read them!

Y'know, I was really thrilled years ago when I was promoted from Editor in Chief to Publisher. But I wouldn't have been so thrilled if I had realized it would mean I wouldn't have time to continue with my comic book writing. Instead, as Publisher, my new duties took me all over the world, speaking at comic book conventions, schools, colleges and universities. I also spoke to Parent-Teacher organizations as well as countless groups of educators, businessmen, students, hippies, servicemen—any group who'd give me a listen.

To tell the truth (and you know I'd never lie to a Merry Marvelite!) I loved traveling and I loved speaking. I've always been something of a ham and the idea of waxing eloquent to a captive audience really hit the spot with me. But there was one thing I missed. I missed the excitement of working with the guys in the Bullpen and the endless discussions like "Let's have the FF fight the Silver Surfer next." "But the Surfer's a good guy!" "So what? We can make him a bad guy for just this story." "But we did that last year." "Okay, so what if a Skrull impersonates the Surfer?" "Hey, how about if the Surfer invades the Skrull's planet?" "But where does that leave the Fantastic Four?" "Oh, that's right. We shouldn't forget our main characters!" "How about if the FF fights the Justice League?" "You wanna get us all fired???" "Just kidding! Just kidding!" Well, Bunky, you get the idea!

The strange thing is, most publishers are businessmen. What they do is publish (whatever that means). But even though I had that title, I wasn't really doing any publishing. I was like the Head Public Relations Guy for Marvel.

Later on, I was appointed President of Marvel for a short time. I say "For a short time" because I gave up the Presidenthood (if there isn't such a word there ought'a be) when I began to realize it was taking me further and further away from actually working on the comic books themselves.

So now, years later, I'm out in Los Angeles, which is 3,000 miles away from where the comics are created. But at least this is where the Marvel movies and animated cartoons are produced, so I still feel as though I'm part of the magnificence that is Marvel!

Getting back to the fabulous FF (You probably thought I forgot about them by now), I'm often asked which are my favorite story lines. That's hard to answer for two reasons. 1) Because I don't remember all of them, and (2) Because I love 'em all. I will say, however, that good ol' Doc Doom has always been and will always be my favorite villain. Jack's depiction of him is, to my mind, a true masterpiece. I don't know of any villain, anywhere, who looks the part as well as the ever redoubtable Victor Von Doom. Also, I always tried to imbue him with a certain nobility. Even though he's not what you'd call a nice guy, his word is his bond and he has his own code of justice. A psychiatrist could have a field day with ol' Vic.

As for my favorite FF story, although I truly dig them all, the one that lingers in my mind is "This Man, This Monster." It features the ever-lovin' blue-eyed Thing who makes as great a sacrifice to save another as any hero has ever made in any story. I even think the title itself is a true winner, buy hey, I may be a bit prejudiced.

Well, that's it for now, True Believers. I didn't go into any detail about the stories themselves in this issue 'cause I wanna leave enough for Rascally Roy to write. And since he's the appreciative type, maybe he'll say a kind word or two for ol' far-away Stan.

Let me, however, leave you with this thought. Marvel has become a world-famous, cultural and creative icon and the book you're now holding features the team that started it all. You're not just about to read a book— you're about to have a date with history!

EXCELSIOR!

2009

INTRODUCTION
BY ROY THOMAS

"Lo, There Shall Come An Ending!"

That was a Stan Lee title, if ever there was one—and it would likewise fit this 12th volume of *Marvel Masterworks: Fantastic Four,* which contains the last issues of Marvel's Silver Age flagship title that Stan would write.

This volume and the previous one represent the end of an era…the epoch of the Stan Lee-Jack Kirby *FF* that began with that Summer 1961 first issue I purchased off the newsstand around the time I graduated from college. *Fantastic Four* instantly became one of my favorite comics series, and I still consider the Thing the best of all the modern-day Marvel characters. Spider-*Who?* The Incredible *What?* "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine" was my Marvel Holy Grail, the title that, once I went to work for Stan in 1965, I most hoped I would get to write one day.

So when Stan informed me one day in 1971 that he was taking a several-issue hiatus from *FF, Amazing Spider-Man,* and *Thor* to write a screenplay with French film director Alain Resnais, I was quick to declare dibs on—you guessed it. To my chagrin, however, Stan insisted that, if I found I had time to write only *one* of the thre esome, he wanted it to be *Spidey.* Thus, when I found myself too busy with that mag and other increased editorial responsibilities, I grudgingly handed the scripting chores of *FF* #115-plus over to the venerable Archie Goodwin. I'd missed my chance to become the second person ever to write *Fantastic Four*…not that the readers had reason to notice or care, since Archie did his usual superlative job.

By issue #117, which opens this volume, Archie had hit his stride on the book, and he and Big John Buscema were working like a well-oiled machine. He handled Agatha Harkness and the other supporting characters as if he'd been writing them all his life, and he and John even turned the lackluster Diablo into a viable super-villain!

As #117 was in production, though, publisher Martin Goodman decided to discontinue his new policy of turning Marvel's mags into 48-pagers and to revert all the comics, after only a month or so, to 32-pagers. I'd loved those bigger books. But this was probably a godsend to the more meticulous Archie, who found it difficult to write a 34-page *FF* every month and still get anything *else* done.

Since the last 15 pages of what should've been the wind-up of the story in *FF* #117 had to be carried over to the next issue, Archie and John needed to quickly come up with a 6-page self-contained tale to fill the back pages of #118. Archie came up with a poignant gem, which had a nice surprise ending. Read "What Mad World?" and see if you don't agree.

At this time, though—with one more issue to go before Smiley would return from his screenwriting stint—Archie opted to leave the *FF* Matter of fact, this may well have been the time when he left Marvel entirely for a while to write for DC. I hated to see him go, but at least I could now become the *third* guy ever to script *FF* (again, not that anybody but me should care).

The story I wrote—set in the fictitious African country called Rudyarda (after Rudyard Kipling, he of "the white man's burden")—was based on one I'd planned to write with artist Alex Toth, a couple of months before, as a backup feature in the 48-page *Avengers*. That hadn't worked out, and so with #119 Rudyarda became a part of the *FF* milieu.

Perhaps I should've set that tale of apartheid in South Africa and had done with it. After all, Rudyarda clearly was meant to be a stand-in for the South Africa of 1972 (with maybe a touch of Rhodesia in the actual naming). But I felt that, never having even visited that actual nation, it wouldn't be quite fair for me to set up my own version of what I felt South Africa was like, only to criticize it. I preferred to add Rudyarda to that nonexistent world globe that's dotted with places like Ruritania, Fredonia, and the Duchy of Grand Fenwick. The story attracted some attention, and I was happy to see it included in the *Marvel Visionaries: Roy Thomas* hardcover a couple of years back.

(My only regret re #119 was that, while still winding up his screenplay, Stan decided T'Challa, the Black Panther, should be rechristened the Black Leopard to sidestep the ongoing confusion with the controversial Black Panther Party. That change didn't last long, but I did have to introduce and justify the name change in that issue.)

At that point, Stan completed the screenplay *The Monster Maker,* which sadly was never filmed, and returned to *Fantastic Four,* just in time to give Galactus a new herald, Gabriel the Air-Walker.

That was a clever touch. The world-gobbling Galactus hadn't had a herald since the Silver Surfer had rebelled years earlier, and a guy who devours planets definitely needs an advance man. That issue also introduced "Blood-n-Guts" Collins, the FF's Baxter Building landlord…and I was sorry more wasn't done with him. He could've been the group's J. Jonah Jameson.

Next issue, of course, the Surfer showed up to face his successor—and in #122 Galactus himself finally arrived (he wasn't wearing a bib, but you knew what he'd come for!) The story wound up in #123, with the Surfer's tragic sacrifice. A four-issue story arc, perhaps the best since Jack Kirby had done a runner nearly two years before.

Working in concert with John Buscema, Stan retained his sure touch on *FF,* and I figured that was the way it was gonna be from then on, with Lee and Buscema creating, month after month, new classics in the Lee-Kirby tradition. The two-part "Monster" story in #124-125 didn't have the majesty of the Gabriel/Galactus/Surfer saga, but it was no more of a diminishing than what had followed the original "Galactus Trilogy" in 1965-66. You can't do cosmic epics month after month in a series that's essentially grounded on Earth. Like a good baseball pitcher, you need a change of pace…and that was something Stan and his artists always had up their collective sleeve.

But then, with *FF* #126, to my amazement, Stan, who'd already relinquished the scripting of first *Thor* and then *Spider-Man* to Gerry Conway, who we agreed was the best choice, decided that the company's flagship was to be turned over to a new captain, as well. I accepted the *FF*—as an ongoing assignment now—with mixed emotions: glad to be writing the book on a regular basis…but sorry that I, and the other readers, would be deprived of all the stories of the group that I knew Stan still had in him.

I felt the best thing to do was to go back to basics, so I retold the origin of the Fantastic Four as a flashback. That issue's cover featured the first homage to that of *FF* #1 ever done—though it was certainly far from the last! In addition, to shake things up a bit: I'd always loved that single 1953 Human Torch story drawn by the great Russ Heath, so I gave photocopies of it to John Buscema and asked him to alter Johnny Storm's flames so he looked more like the "man on fire" that Heath had drawn. I liked the result, and it stuck around for a while.

Since the Mole Man had been the FF's first foe, I brought him back as the first opponent they'd face in my new "reign"… tying in Tyrannus and even Kala, queen of the underground Atlanteans, from earlier Marvel comics. (Of course, I had Stan's approval for all this. He was still very much around—having become, around this time, the company's president and publisher, with my humble self elevated to Editor in Chief but still very much, and not unwillingly, in his shadow.)

I remember a few odd little things about *FF* #127. More than anything, I recall that John Buscema's full pencils for it were some of the best I've ever seen from him, even counting *Sub-Mariner, The Silver Surfer,* and *Conan.* Joe Sinnott's the best *FF* inker that ever slid down the pike, but that was one issue I'd have loved to print from pencils. John's moody subterranean scenes ranked with the best ever done.

The other thing I remember is that Stan asked me if I'd mind working into the dialogue somewhere a reference to the city of Waxahachie, Texas. Some bigwig he was dealing with at the time in his capacity as president/publisher hailed from there—and Stan thought the guy'd get a kick out of seeing his hometown's funny name in print. So I did it, no sweat, putting it in the mouth of the Thing, who else? (The irony is that, several years later, I met and eventually married Danette Couto, now Dann Thomas, and her uncle and aunt live in…yep…Waxahachie, Texas! We've visited them there a number of times.)

The final issue in this volume, #128, finished off that sub-Earth storyline, and I was reasonably happy with it. But one weird thing happened, the details of which are a bit sketchy in my mind. For years, the occasional fan has asked me why there's an extra four-page slick-paper center section depicting "The Fabulous FF's Friends—and Foes!" smack in the middle of that issue.

The way I recall is that somebody in the federal government decided that Marvel had broken some kind of rule. Maybe it had to do with the Nixon wage-and-price freeze, which had been put in place for three months beginning in August 1971. This had been just around the time Marvel's comics quickly went up and down, roller-coaster-like, in size and of course in price—from 15¢ to 25¢ to 20¢. Frankly, it makes my head hurt to even *try* to recall the exact circumstances. But, to get the feds off our back, Stan decreed that John B. should draw and I should script those four added pages (at, of course, extra expense to Marvel) the company's way, presumably, of making up to the great American public some terrible wrong it had committed. So I did, and no more was heard from Washington.

They're actually rather *nice* pages, come to that.

And so we end this volume on that offbeat note…showing that even the Fantastic Four can't fight city hall.

But, man—under Lee and Kirby and Buscema and Romita and even under Goodwin and Thomas…they did pretty well against Dr. Doom, Galactus, and everybody else!

2009

Roy Thomas has been a writer and ofttimes editor in the comic book field since 1965, far more for Marvel than for any other company...and it's something he's quite proud of. He counts his association with Stan Lee as one of the highlights of his first nigh-seven decades...and the Fantastic Four is still his favorite Marvel concept, and the Thing one of his favorite heroes of all time.

FANTASTIC FOUR

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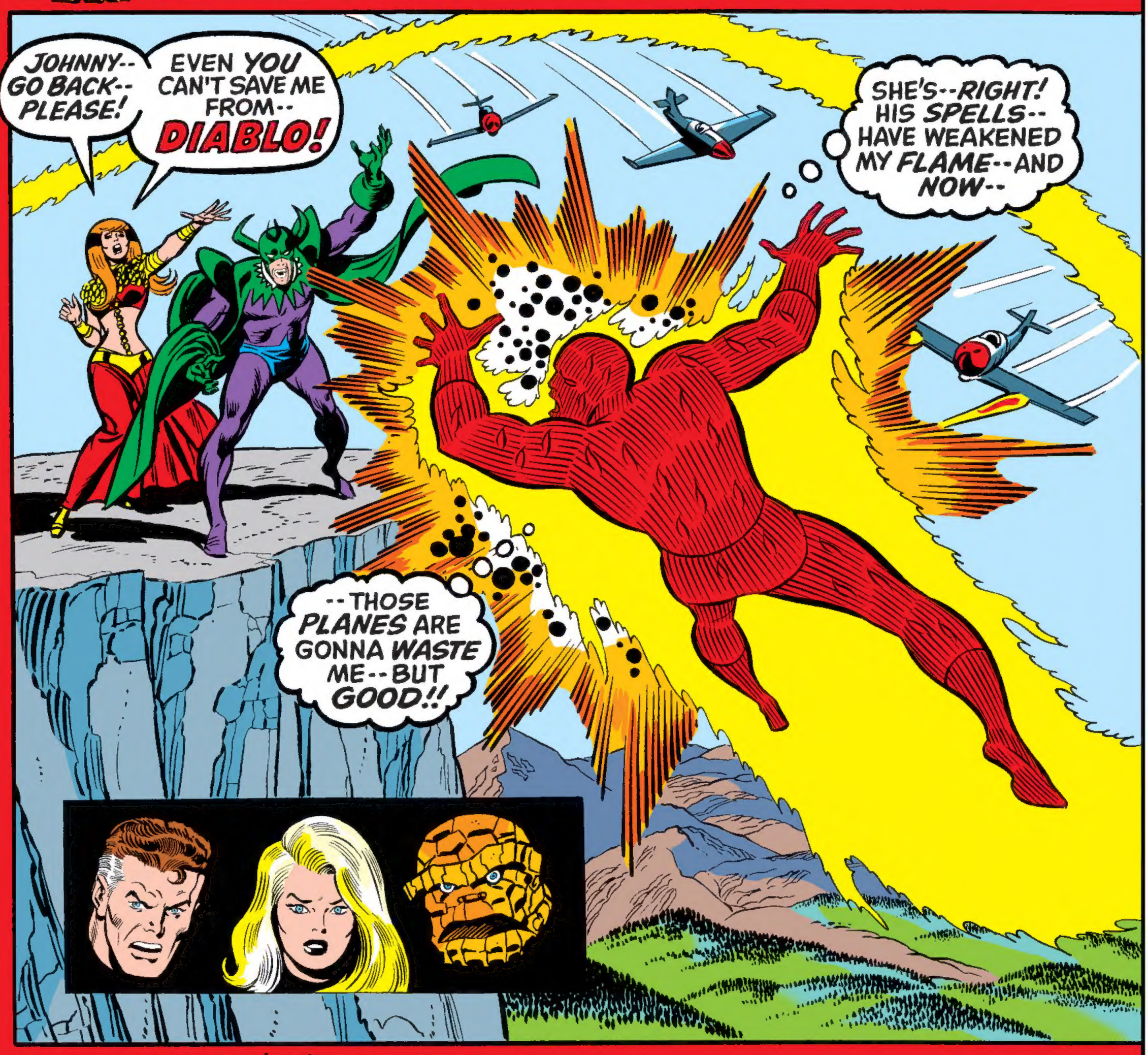
JOHNNY--GO BACK--PLEASE!
EVEN YOU CAN'T SAVE ME FROM--DIABLO!
SHE'S--RIGHT! HIS SPELLS--HAVE WEAKENED MY FLAME--AND NOW--
--THOSE PLANES ARE GONNA WASTE ME--BUT GOOD!!

THE FLAME AND THE QUEST!

A RAMPAGING TORCH ABANDONS THE F.F. TO SEEK OUT THE GIRL HE LOVES!

THE FLAME AND THE QUEST!

IT STARTED LAST ISSUE WITH THE OVER-MIND'S DEFEAT; THIS DISSATISFACTION, THIS DISILLUSIONMENT GRIPPING JOHNNY STORM. IT SENT HIM FROM NEW YORK IN ANGRY, AIMLESS FLIGHT, CARRIED HIM THROUGH AN EPIC EN-COUNTER WITH THE SUB-MARINER.* AND NOW---

NOW IT BRINGS HIM TO THE HIGH HIMALAYAS, TO A SECRET CITY HIDDEN AMONGST THE THRUSTING PEAKS, AND --PERHAPS--TO WAIT-ING TRAGEDY...

THE GREAT REFUGE-- HOME OF THE INHUMANS!

THIS IS WHERE I SHOULD HAVE COME IN THE FIRST PLACE!

EVERYTHING I NEED TO GET IT TOGETHER AGAIN IS RIGHT THERE!

FEATURING-- THE MYSTERY OF CRYSTAL, THE EXQUISITE ELEMENTAL! AS EXPLORED BY:

STAN LEE EDITOR | ARCHIE GOODWIN WRITER | JOHN BUSCEMA ARTIST | JOE SINNOTT INKER / SAM ROSEN LETTERER

*ON VIEW NOW IN ISSUE #44 OF NAMOR'S OWN MAG--- STAN

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AND MY IDEA OF *EVERY-THING* IS A CERTAIN REDHEAD NAMED *CRYSTAL.*

JUST SEEING HER, *HOLDING* HER, IS GONNA MAKE ALL THE STUPID HASSLES OF THE LAST FEW DAYS *WORTH* IT!

NOW THAT I'M THIS *CLOSE,* I DON'T SEE HOW I *STOOD* BEING SEPARATED FROM HER SO *LONG.*

IF ONLY SHE COULD REJOIN THE *TEAM* AGAIN.

IF ONLY SHE WEREN'T *FORCED* TO STAY AMONG HER OWN *PEOPLE.*

*"IF ONLY THAT TERRIBLE DAY HAD NEVER **COME** WHEN---"*

JOHNNY! IT'S HAPPENING *AGAIN*---I--I'M F-FAINTING--!

CRYS! CRYS!

*"IF ONLY **REED** HAD NEVER **HAD** TO SAY--"*

IT'S *HOPELESS!*

ALL THOSE *YEARS* IN THE INHUMANS' *POL-LUTION-FREE* EN-VIRONMENT---

CRYSTAL IS WITHOUT *RESISTANCE* TO ALL THE THINGS PLAGUING *US!*

*"IF ONLY SHE HADN'T HAD TO **RETURN** TO THE GREAT REFUGE--**OR DIE!**"*

IT'S NOT *FAIR!* NO! *NO!*

JOHNNY! YOU *MUSTN'T* FLAME ON--NOT WHILE LOCKJAW IS *TELE-PORTING!*

LEAVE IT TO *REED!* I WAS GOING *WILD* AT LOSING CRYS, AND HE TRIED TO BE *PRACTICAL.*

I COULD HARDLY *SEE* THAT MONSTER PUP SHE CALLS A *PET,* LET ALONE WORRY ABOUT IT *TELE-PORTING.*

UH-OH! I'M ALMOST OVER THE *CITY.*

BETTER FIND A *QUIET SPOT* TO SET DOWN SO I DON'T SHAKE ANYONE U---

ZDAK!

UNGHHHH!

IT IS *DONE*, CHIRON! THE *ION-BLAST* HAS STUNNED THE INTRUDER--- HIS FLAME *FADES!* HE *FALLS!*

GOOD WORK, KALIBAN! NOW *TO* HIM, ASMODEUS!

I *FLY*, I *OBEY*...

--I *STRIKE!* IN THE NAME OF OUR *TRUE LEADER*--

--*MAXIMUS* THE MIGHTY!

M-MAXIMUS--?

THAT *MADMAN* HAS TAKEN OVER *AGAIN* FROM CRYSTAL'S COUSIN, *BLACK BOLT?*

JOHNNY BOY, IT'S TIME TO STOP FEELING *GROGGY* AND START TO...

FLAME ON!

HE BLASTS *FREE!* LIKE A LIVING *SUNBURST!*

THE FORCE IS SO *GREAT* EVEN ASMODEUS' *HEAT-RESISTANT WINGS* COULD NOT SMOTHER IT!

FLEE! THE CITY MUST BE TOLD THAT AN ALLY OF BLACK BOLT AND THE OTHER EXILES IS AMONG US!

IT'S NICE TO BE RECOGNIZED, LITTLE BUDDIES---

BUT BEFORE EVERYONE RUNS AWAY MAD---

I'VE GOT A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS--

GUESS THAT'S WHY YOU JUMPED ME IN THE FIRST PLACE.

YOU SEEM TO LIKE GIVING ORDERS--

LET'S SEE IF YOU HAND OUT ANSWERS AS WILLINGLY!

FIREBALLS--

BUT WHATEVER POWERS YOU TURN AGAINST ME, YOUTH---

I ANSWER TO NONE BUT MAXIMUS!

SAVE WITH THIS!

IN WHICH CASE, CHARLIE, YOU JUST BECAME SPEECHLESS!

AND I'D HATE TO THINK THAT--FOR YOUR SAKE!

MY BACK IS TO THE EMBANKMENT! I-I CANNOT RETREAT--

YOUR BLASTS CAME TOO CLOSE--- TOO CLOSE!

THEN TALK UP! WHERE'S CRYSTAL? WHAT'S MAXIMUS DONE WITH HER SINCE TAKING OVER?!

CRYSTAL? OF THE ROYAL FAMILY? BUT IT IS COMMON KNOWLEDGE--

SHE IS WITH YOUR GROUP.

DON'T PLAY GAMES. I MEAN SINCE SHE RETURNED TO THE GREAT REFUGE!

RETURNED? BUT SHE HAS NEVER RETURNED HERE!

WE WOULD HAVE MADE HER PRISONER--- OR SENT HER FLEEING WITH BLACK BOLT AND THE OTHERS.

Y-YOU'RE TELLING THE TRUTH!

IF MAXIMUS HAD CRYSTAL, HE'D FLAUNT IT. THAT'S THE STYLE OF A MADMAN LIKE HIM!

BUT IF CRYS NEVER MADE IT HERE, WHAT HAPPENED TO HER? WHERE DID SHE GO?!

I'VE TOLD YOU ALL I KNOW. W-WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH ME--?

YOU? I DON'T GIVE A RAP FOR YOU, OR MAXIMUS, OR THE GREAT REFUGE!

ONLY CRYS!

WHEREVER SHE WENT, I'VE GOT TO FIND HER!

LET TIME PASS, MOVE ACROSS SPACE. COME FORWARD A DAY, TWO-- HALF A WORLD'S DISTANCE---

-- TO A PLACE CALLED WHISPER HILL---

-- AND A WOMAN NAMED AGATHA HARKNESS.

YES, EBONY. I TOO HEAR OUR GUESTS.

IT'S NICE, ISN'T IT? THE SOUND OF LAUGHTER IN LATE AFTER-NOON---

IF ONLY IT DIDN'T FADE SO SOON.

BUT FOR NOW THE PLEASANT SOUND *LINGERS*-- AS A MOTHER AND FATHER FIND *DELIGHT* IN THEIR CHILD---

REED! JUST *LOOK* AT FRANKLIN! SOON HE'LL BE TAKING HIS *FIRST STEP!*

TAKING A SHORT *VACATION* UP HERE WAS A *WONDERFUL* IDEA.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO CONVINCE *ME*, SWEETHEART. I *SUGGESTED* IT, REMEMBER?

TOO BAD *JOHNNY* ISN'T HERE TO SEE HOW HIS NEPHEW HAS *GROWN*.

AT LEAST *BEN* AND *ALICIA* WERE ABLE TO JOIN US---

TOURIN' THE HARKNESS PAD IS KINDA LIKE VISITIN' YOUR FAVORITE *MAUSOLEUM*, HUH, KIDDO?

OH, *BEN!* THE ENTIRE HOUSE IS A *TREASURE TROVE.*

SO MANY INTRIGUING *THINGS* TO TOUCH--TO FEEL--

YEAH. THEY COULD SHOW *NIGHT GALLERY* LIVE FROM ANY ROOM IN THE PLACE.

THERE *IS* AN ATMOSPHERE OF MYSTERY-- OF THE *UNUSUAL*-- ABOUT EVERYTHING.

I SUPPOSE THAT'S *WHY* IT'S SO FASCINATING.

MY SENTIMENTS EXACTLY-- *SORTA!*

BUT MEBBE WE SHOULD *REJOIN* REED AN' SUE---

OUTSIDE--IN THE *SUNLIGHT.*

THESE DARK, SPOOKY *CORRIDORS* DON'T DO MUCH FOR MY PEACHES AN' CREAM *COMPLEXION!*

WHY, *BEN.* IF I DIDN'T *KNOW* BETTER, I'D THINK THIS HOUSE MADE YOU *NERVOUS.*

WHO? *ME?*

LISSEN, BABY, IT TAKES *MORE* THAN A BUNCHA PROPS RIGHT OUTTA *DARK SHADOWS* TA MAKE THE BLUE-EYED *THING*--

PURRR-RRR

WUZZAT?!

CALM YOURSELF, MR. GRIMM--

EBONY WAS MERELY BEING *AFFECTIONATE.*

WELL, WHY DON'CHA PUT *COMBAT BOOTS* ON 'IM SO A FELLA CAN HEAR 'IM *COMIN'!*

US *SUPER-HERO* TYPES ARE VERY *SENSITIVE* ABOUT BEIN' SNEAKED UP ON!

=*SHEESH!*= I COULD'A HAD ME A *TRAUMA* OR SUMPIN', AND--

IT'S *MR. RICHARDS!*

BEN!

YEAH! AN' IF HE'S USIN' *ONE* WORD INSTEAD OF *FIFTY,* IT'S GOTTA MEAN *BIG TROUBLE!*

HANG ON, STRETCHO-- I'M ON MY WAY!

HURRY, BIG FELLA-- *HURRY!*

IT'S *JOHNNY!*

HIS FLAME'S *FALTERING* -- HE'S *FALLING!*

STRETCH! HE'S HEADIN' INTO THE *TREES*-- NO WAY I CAN GET *UNDER* 'IM!

AN' THE KID'S GOT ENOUGH FLAME TA BURN YER ARMS *PERMANENTLY* IF YA TRY TA *CATCH* 'IM!

I'M NOT *GOING* TO, BEN--

REMEMBER ME PRACTICING *THIS* MANEUVER?

MY ARMS KEEP HIM FROM *HITTING* THE TREES--

--AND SPRING HIM *AWAY* BEFORE THERE'S ENOUGH *CONTACT* TO BURN ME!

BUT FROM *THERE*--

IT'S UP TA *ME!* NO SWEAT, REED! MEBBE *FOOTBALL* WAS MY SPECIALTY IN COLLEGE---

BUT I'VE SPENT ENOUGH TIME ON THE *DIAMOND*--

--NOT TA FUMBLE A *DOUBLE-PLAY* LIKE THIS!

SPEAK TA ME, MATCH-HEAD! HOW THE HECK DID THIS HAPPEN TO YA?!

PUSHED MYSELF TOO HARD-- FLEW TOO FAR, TOO FAST --OVERTAXED MY POWERS GETTING HERE.

EASY, JUNIOR. YOU'RE STILL UNSTEADY ON YER PINS. HOW'D YA KNOW WHERE WE'D BE?

DIDN'T. HAD TO SEE MISS HARKNESS-- SHE'S THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN HELP!

HELP WHAT, JOHNNY? WHAT'S WRONG, BOY?

CRYSTAL'S GONE-- NOT IN THE GREAT REFUGE-- NOT WITH BLACK BOLT---

FROM THE TIME SHE LEFT US, SHE'S VANISHED! I SEARCHED EVERYWHERE!

AND YOU THOUGHT I COULD SEEK FURTHER, JOHNNY?

YOU'VE USED YOUR OCCULT POWERS TO HELP US IN THE PAST, MISS HARKNESS.

I HOPED--

THEY ARE NOT ALWAYS PREDICTABLE-- OR IN-FALLIBLE.

BUT COME TO THE RITUAL ROOM. LET US SEE---

WHEN REED AND SUE PICKED YOU TO BE LITTLE FRANKLIN'S GUARDIAN, IT WAS A BREAK FOR THE WHOLE F.F.!

I WILL TRY. NOW, I MUST HAVE SILENCE.

IF YOU CAN--

ALL DAY, VAGUE, UNHAPPY PROMONITIONS HAVE TROUBLED ME. I FEAR THEY ARE CONNECTED TO YOUR PROBLEM.

LOOK WITH ME INTO THE MYSTIC CRYSTAL AS IT GLOWS---

LOOK LONG, LOOK DEEP--

LET *SPREAD* THE GLOW LIKE RAMPANT *FIRE*--

LET *GROW* MY SPELL EVER FURTHER, *HIGHER!*

GIVE VAGUE SHAPE *FORM*, LIFT ALL SHADOW THAT *CONCEAL*--

AND SHE FOR WHOM WE *SEARCH*---

REVEAL!

REVEAL!

CRYS--- AND *LOCK-JAW!*

BUT THEY SEEM SO *FAINT*, SO FAR *AWAY*-- CAN'T TELL *WHERE*--

AND--

W-WHAT?

THEY'RE *DISAPPEARING!*

ONE CRUDDY, TANTALIZING *GLIMPSE* AND THEY'RE *GONE!* WHAT HAPPENED, MISS HARKNESS, WHAT *HAPPENED?!*

T-THE *STRAIN* --TOTALLY *EXHAUSTING*--

I-I AM SORRY, JOHNNY. THE EFFORT IS TOO GREAT. I CANNOT CONTINUE---

BUT YOU MADE CONTACT BRIEFLY. WHY IS IT SO HARD TO MAINTAIN? WHERE ARE THEY?

I CANNOT SAY FOR CERTAIN. BUT I FEAR THE GIRL YOU LOVE...

--IS BEYOND THE NORMAL WORLD WE KNOW!

AND UNLESS THAT CONDITION CHANGES, IT IS NOT IN MY POWER --OR YOURS-- TO REACH HER!

OH, CRYS-- CRYS...

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU?

TO LEARN THAT, WE MUST LOOK BACK-- BACK TO MERE MOMENTS AFTER THE EXQUISITE ELEMENTAL LEFT JOHNNY AND THE F.F. ---

LOCKJAW! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!

WHERE HAVE YOU BROUGHT ME? THIS IS A WORLD TOTALLY DECIMATED...

AS THOUGH UNENDING WAR HAD BEEN WAGED FOR EONS-- UNTIL THE FINAL LOSER WAS ALL THAT LIVED.

WHEN JOHNNY FLAMED ON JUST AS WE WERE TELEPORTING, IT MUST HAVE FRIGHTENED YOU.

LOCKJAW, INSTEAD OF A SHORT HOP TO THE GREAT REFUGE--

YOU'VE BROUGHT US INTO--T-THIS!

AND I WISH--

I'D NEVER SEEN IT!

SUCH UTTER DESOLATION, DEVOID OF ANY LIFE IS TOO MUCH TO FACE.

TAKE US BACK, LOCKJAW. TAKE US AWAY RIGHT N--

AN EXPLODING PELLET!

IT--IT'S SPREADING--

P-THAM!

--SLEEP-INDUCING VAPORS! A MORE MINOR ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MASTER OF ALCHEMY--

DIABLO!

YOU MUST NOT DEPART THIS PLACE OF MY BANISHMENT SO QUICKLY, FAIR CHILD-- NOT UNTIL I CAN ACCOMPANY YOU.

AND IT WILL TAKE TIME TO DEVISE THE POTION TO GIVE ME PROPER CONTROL OVER YOU AND YOUR WONDROUS PET.

FOR RESOURCES ARE LIMITED IN THIS WORLD YOU SO DISLIKED---

THIS WORLD WHICH IS BUT THE FARTHEST FUTURE OF EARTH ITSELF!

A FUTURE I SHALL AT LAST ESCAPE TO WORK MY VENGEANCE ON HE WHO SENT ME HERE--DR. DOOM!*

*DOC DID IT IN MARVEL SUPER-HEROES #20. -- STAN.

THUS, MOMENTS AFTER LEAVING THE FANTASTIC FOUR, CRYSTAL BECAME A PRISONER OF ONE OF THEIR FORMER ENEMIES--A PRISONER LOCKED FROM THE PRESENT---

AND *IN* THAT PRESENT, THE DARK MANTLE OF *NIGHT* HAS SPREAD.

SLEEP HAS COME TO WHISPER HILL-- COME TO ALL BUT *ONE*---

ONE WHO RESTLESSLY TREADS THE SILENT CORRIDORS, SHADOWED THE STAIRS---

--SEEKING SOMETHING WHICH MIGHT DIVERT OR *DULL* HIS ANGUISH---

--*KNOWING* HE WILL NOT FIND IT.

LIGHT! COMING FROM THE *RITUAL ROOM*--

THAT *MYSTIC GIZMO* OF MISS HARKNESS---

IT'S STILL *WORKING!*

SHE WAS SO *EXHAUSTED* WHEN WE LEFT--

MUST NOT HAVE CANCELLED THE *SPELL*, OR WHATEVER *CONTROLS* IT.

AN *IMAGE* IN IT! SHARP AND *CLEAR*-- NOT DISTANT-LOOKING LIKE *BEFORE*.

ONE OF THOSE *MAYAN PYRAMIDS*-- THE KIND THEY HAVE IN *CENTRAL AMERICA!*

AND IN FRONT OF ITS *TEMPLE*---

S-SOMETHING'S *APPEARING*--

IT'S--

CRYS!

B-BUT--

THAT'S DIABLO WITH HER AND LOCKJAW!

BUT WHY IS SHE WEARING THAT NUTTY COSTUME?

I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN HE EXISTED!*

WHAT'S HE DOING WITH HER?!

*NOT SURPRISING, SINCE IT WAS WAY BACK IN ISSUE #35 THAT THE F.F. LAST FACED HIM -- STAN.

I'M NOT WAITING FOR THAT MYSTIC GLOBE TO SHOW ME THE ANSWERS--

NOT NOW THAT I HAVE A LEAD!

BACK OFF, YA YANCEY STREET CREEPS---

DON'T DO IT-- DON'T THROW THAT--

GOTTA SHAKE THESE DUDS BORROWED FROM REED FOR MY TORCHIN' TOGS!

FLAME ON!

FTOOM!

YEEEOWWW!

THAT TEARS IT! I LOVE LITTLE FRANKLIN BUT I AIN'T COMIN' NEAR THIS CHAMBER OF HORRORS AGAIN!

THE NIGHT-MARES I GET IN THIS PLACE ARE---

HEY!

TORCHY AIN'T IN HIS BED! IF THAT MEANS WHAT I THINK--

I KNEW IT!

BLASTED, LOVE-SICK, MATCH-HEADED MANIAC!

CAN'CHA EVER LEARN TA STOP RUSHIN' OFF ON YER OWN?

GONNA BE LIKE ME ALL YER LIFE?!

BUT BEN GRIMM'S WORDS GO UNHEARD, ***UNHEEDED!*** NOT SO THOSE OF ***ANOTHER***-- SHOUTED IN THE CLEAN MORNING AIR OF A DISTANT LAND, SHOUTED AMID MAYAN RUINS-- THAT ARE RUINS NO ***LONGER!***

COME ***FORWARD,*** MY OPPRESSED FRIENDS OF ***TERRA VERDE!***

COME ***CLOSER***--- AND VIEW THE ***MIRACLE!***

THIS ANCIENT ***SHRINE***-- ONCE CRUMBLING, MOLDERING---

IT IS ***BEYOND BELIEF!***

OVER-NIGHT IT IS AS ***NEW!***

AND WHO HAS ***WROUGHT*** THIS MIRACLE, AMIGOS?

AIDED BY ***ME,*** HER HUMBLE PRIEST! SHE HAS ***RETURNED*** AS YOUR LEGENDS FORETELL---

THE GODDESS ***IXCHEL!***

RETURNED TO ***FREE*** YOU FROM THE YOKE OF A ***TYRANT!***

AI! SINCE GENERAL ROBLES AND THE ARMY TOOK OVER THE LAND, NO ONE HAS DARED ***MENTION*** THAT ANCIENT PREDICTION!

BUT YOU ARE NOT OF ***OUR*** PEOPLE. HOW MAY WE BE ***CERTAIN*** THAT IS TRULY ***IXCHEL?***

IS THE PROOF OF A GODDESS IN THE ***FORM*** SHE TAKES, SKEPTICAL ONE-- OR IN THE ***POWER*** SHE DISPLAYS?

NOW, MY MISTRESS OF THE ELEMENTS---A SMALL ***DEMONSTRATION.***

YOU WHO HAVE ***DOUBTS***--

BEHOLD!

BEHOLD THE VERY *EARTH* AT YOUR FEET-- RENT OPEN WITH A *GESTURE!*

A COLUMN OF *FIRE* BURSTING FORTH WITH A WAVE OF THE *HAND!*

WATER TO EXTINGUISH IT-- CALLED DOWN FROM THE *HEAVENS!*

AND ALL MADE AS IT *WAS*---

-- IN THE FLICKER OF AN *EYE!*

CAN YOU BEHOLD *THIS*-- AND *DENY* YOU LOOK UPON *IXCHEL?*

I SEE YOU *CANNOT,* MY FRIENDS.

BUT THERE IS NO NEED TO *FEAR.* IXCHEL'S WRATH IS NOT FOR *YOU*--

-- BUT THE DICTATOR *ROBLES* WHO *ENSLAVES* YOU, WHO GRINDS TERRA VERDE BENEATH HIS *HEEL!*

YOU WILL *RISE UP*-- YOU WILL *FIGHT* HIM!

AND YOU WILL *WIN!* BECAUSE *IXCHEL* IS AT YOUR *SIDE!*

SI!

SI!

VIVA LA REVOLUCION!

MARCH, AMIGOS -- MARCH ON THE *TYRANT!* YOU SHALL BE *FREE!*

FREE TO BE RULED BY *ME.*

AND YOUR *INHUMAN* POWERS, SO WELL SUITED TO THE ROLE OF *GODDESS,* MADE IT *POSSIBLE!*

BUT WHAT'S *THIS?* DO I PERCEIVE A *FADING* OF THE LIGHT OF *OBEDIENCE* IN THOSE LOVELY EYES?

INTO THE *TEMPLE,* MY DEAR---

IT IS TIME TO *RENEW* THE POTION BINDING YOU AND YOUR BEHEMOTH *CANINE.*

FOR THOUGH MY *ALCHEMY* IS POTENT ENOUGH TO RESTORE THIS ENTIRE *STRUCTURE*--

ITS *EFFECTS,* ALAS, ARE STILL ONLY *TEMPORARY.*

BUT *SOON,* MY SWEET, THAT SHALL ALL CHANGE! TERRA VERDE IS *RICH* IN THE RARE CHEMICALS MY ANCIENT ALCHEMISTS' TOMES CALL FOR.

ONCE I CONTROL THIS LAND AND ITS *RESOURCES,* THE WONDERS I CAN CREATE---

--SHALL BE WITHOUT *LIMIT!*

HOW ***MANY*** TIMES WHILE TRAPPED IN THAT BLEAK, DESOLATE ***FUTURE,*** I PLOTTED A MOVE SUCH AS THIS! BUT ONLY ***YOUR*** APPEARANCE MADE IT FEASIBLE.

HERE, MY CHILD--

YOU MAY DRINK TO OUR ***SUCCESS!***

FOR WITH IT, I'LL HAVE MY OWN ***COUNTRY,*** UNIQUELY SUITED TO MY OWN ***NEEDS*** --

I'LL BE ON EQUAL FOOTING IN THE WORLD WITH ***DOCTOR DOOM!***

AND THEN--***THEN***--I SHALL WREAK ***VENGEANCE*** UPON HIM.

MEANWHILE, SOME MILES AWAY--AT THE ***ROYAL PALACE*** IN TERRA VERDE'S CAPITAL CITY---

GENERAL ROBLES! THERE IS ***TROUBLE*** IN THE HILLS-- THE PEOPLE RISE IN ***REVOLT!***

THEY BELIEVE THE GODDESS ***IXCHEL*** HAS RETURNED TO SET THEM ***FREE,*** IN FULFILLMENT OF THE OLD ***LEGENDS!***

LUIS, YOU ARE A ***FINE*** HEAD OF SECRET POLICE--

IF ONLY YOU DIDN'T ***SHOUT*** SO.

A ***BAD*** THING, SHOUTING--

SHOWS LACK OF ***BREEDING,*** LUIS. WITHOUT BREEDING, A MAN IS NO BETTER THAN A ***PEASANT.***

AH, MY ***POOR*** PEASANTS-- SMALL WONDER THEY NEED THEIR ***GENERAL*** TO GUIDE THEM!

A ***GODDESS,*** YOU SAY, LUIS? THEY ***BELIEVE*** IN A GODDESS?

AH, MY POOR, FOOLISH ***CHILDREN***--

BUT A GOOD FATHER MUST BE *STERN* WITH HIS CHILDREN WHEN NEED BE. *NO*, AMIGO?

THEY HAVE *ME* TO BELIEVE IN -- NOT SOME SILLY *SUPERSTITION*.

I RECALL, LUIS, THE *AIR FORCE* WAS EAGER TO TEST THOSE NEW *JETS* --

I SHALL SEE TO IT AT *ONCE*, MI GENERAL---

AND ALL TOO *QUICKLY*, TERRA VERDE'S CLEAR BLUE SKY--

-- ECHOES WITH A SOUND OF *THUNDER*.

HOMBRES-- CUIDADO!

REBEL COLUMN IN *SIGHT*, COMPADRES.

THEY HAVE *NO* HEAVY DEFENSIVE WEAPONS.

COME IN *LOW* -- ATTACK AT *WILL!*

MADRE DE DIOS! IT IS A *SLAUGHTER!*

THE GODDESS *IXCHEL*, WAS AT THE HEAD OF THE COLUMN---

DO NOT *SAY* IT! IF SO, WE ARE *LOST!*

W-WAIT! IN THE AIR *ABOVE* THE PLANES---

AI! COULD THE BLAST HAVE--?

WHAT *IS* IT?

CENTRAL AMERICA AT LAST! BUT WHAT THE HECK'S GOING ON? I DIDN'T HEAR ABOUT ANY WARS DOWN HERE!

CAN'T SEE ANYTHING BELOW THAT SMOKE-- MUST BE SOME KIND OF TARGET PRACTICE OR WAR GAMES.

FOR ONCE, I'M GONNA DO WHAT REED WOULD WANT, AND BUTT OUT. I CAME TO FIND CRYSTAL. THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ME!

TO BE CONCLUDED--NEXT ISSUE!

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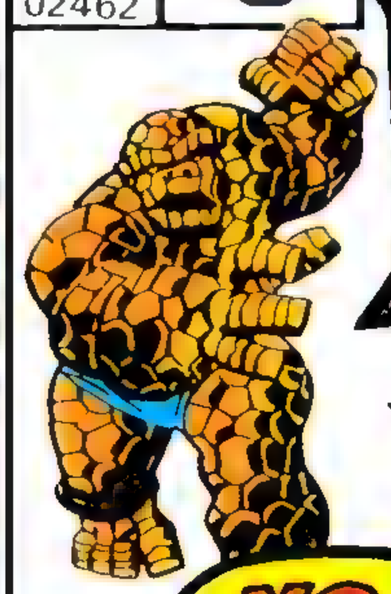

THUNDER IN THE RUINS

PLUS: THE THING FIGHTS ALONE!

FAR FROM THE REST OF THE F.F., CAN THE TORCH *ALONE* DEFEAT THE DREAD *DIABLO?*

THUNDER IN THE RUINS!

A SEARCH FOR THE GIRL HE *LOVES* BROUGHT THE *HUMAN TORCH* TO THESE SKIES ABOVE CENTRAL AMERICA. BUT NOW, SOMETHING VERY *DIFFERENT* SENDS HIM DIVING INTO THIS FORMATION OF GLEAMING JETS--- AN OUTBURST OF *ANGER* AND *OUTRAGE!*

IF THE *WIND* HADN'T CLEARED THE *SMOKE* BELOW---

I'D HAVE GONE ON MY MERRY *WAY* THINKING THIS WAS JUST *TARGET PRACTICE* OR *WAR GAMES!*

THEY'RE *SLAUGHTERING* A COLUMN OF *PEOPLE* ON THE ROAD!

LET'S SEE HOW THEY *DO* AGAINST SOMEONE WHO FIGHTS *BACK!*

·1962·

BRINGING YOU THIS *ENDING* TO JOHNNY STORM'S QUEST FOR THE EXQUISITE ELEMENTAL, *CRYSTAL*, ARE:

STAN LEE	ARCHIE GOODWIN	JOHN BUSCEMA
EDITOR	WRITER	ARTIST

JIM MOONEY *INKER* ✱ SAM ROSEN *LETTERER*

MAYBE I'VE NO *BUSINESS* MIXING IN ANOTHER COUNTRY'S *AFFAIRS*---

BUT STANDING STILL FOR A *MASSACRE* ISN'T MY STYLE, EITHER!

AT LEAST *I'M* MAKING SURE THOSE BIRDS CAN *BAIL OUT.*

FROM THE BRIEF *GLIMPSE* I GOT OF THE GROUND BELOW---

-- THAT'S *DEFINITELY* FAR MORE OF A *CHANCE* THAN THEY GAVE THOSE POOR DEVILS ON THE *ROAD!*

NO MATTER WHAT THE ISSUES ARE *SUPPOSED* TO BE IN THIS ONE-SIDED *FRACAS*--

THEY *CAN'T* BE IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO MAKE MY *CONSCIENCE* HURT---

-- AT MELTING THE *WAR TOYS* OF A BUNCH OF *DELINQUENTS* OUT FROM UNDER THEM!

UH-OH! THOSE LAST TWO BANDITS ARE CATCHING ON TO MY TACTICS.

GONNA TAKE SOME MANEUVERIN' TO DODGE THAT HEAT-SEEKING AMMO AND GET TO WHERE I CAN---

BUT THE TORCH'S THOUGHTS ARE SHATTERED BY THE SUDDEN, VIOLENT SOUND OF METAL SHRILLY RENDING--

W-WHAT..?!

IT'S AS THOUGH THE AIR CURRENTS RIPPED THE PLANE APART--!

B-BUT HOW?!

WAIT!

ON THE GROUND--

COMING OUT FROM COVER AMONG THOSE ROCKS WITH THE OTHER PEOPLE--

IT LOOKS LIKE--

YES, JOHNNY STORM. IT IS THE GIRL POSSESSED OF SPECTACULAR POWER OVER THE ELEMENTS, SUCH AS FIRE, AS WATER--- OR AS AIR.

IT IS THE GIRL BORN OF THAT STRANGE SPECIES OF GENETICALLY-ADVANCED BEINGS CALLED---THE INHUMANS.

IT IS CRYSTAL --THE GIRL YOU LOVE.

CRYS! CRYS! I'D BEGUN TO THINK I'D NEVER FIND YOU!

WHEN I FOUND YOU'D NEVER RETURNED TO YOUR HOME IN THE GREAT REFUGE AFTER LEAVING THE F.F.--*

WHEN AGATHA HARKNESS'S MYSTICAL POWERS SHOWED YOU WITH THAT CHEMICAL-SLINGING CREEP, DIABLO..*I--

HEY! WHY AM I DOING ALL THIS TALKIN'?

*ALL LAST ISH...STAN.

WHEN I SHOULD BE DOING---

..THIS!

HOW DARE YOU LAY HANDS UPON THE GODDESS, IXCHEL?!

HUH?!

BECAUSE YOU HELPED STRIKE DOWN FORCES OF THE TYRANT WHO OPPRESSES MY PEOPLE, I AM LENIENT.

PRESUME SUCH INTIMACY AGAIN, AND YOU SHALL SUFFER MY WRATH.

CRYS! HONEY---

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? COME BACK HERE!

CRYS! WAIT! **WAIT!**

ARE YOU **MAD,** AMIGO, TO TELL A **GODDESS** TO WAIT?

SHE FULFILLS THE ANCIENT **LEGEND**-- AND LEADS OUR REVOLT AGAINST **GENERAL ROBLES,** DICTATOR OF TERRA VERDE!

I DON'T KNOW FROM LOCAL LEGENDS **OR** POLITICS, BUT I **DO** KNOW SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT WITH **MY GIRL!**

AND I'VE GOT A GOOD IDEA **WHAT!**

CRYS, LISTEN TO ME-- **LISTEN!**

THIS IS **DIABLO'S** DOING, ISN'T IT? **ISN'T** IT?!

HE'S BEEN SLIPPING YOU ONE OF HIS **POTIONS**-- USING IT TO **CONTROL** YOU, **RIGHT?**

I KNOW HOW HE **WORKS**-- HE DID THE SAME THING TO **BEN** ONCE.*

AI!

THE FLAMING ONE SPEAKS **BLASPHEMY!**

*DONE DURING DIABLO'S **DEBUT** IN F.F.#30. --STAN.

YOU **PERSIST** IN CALLING ME BY A NAME I DO NOT **KNOW**-- IN STATING MATTERS THAT **CANNOT** BE.

THE PATIENCE OF IXCHEL **ENDS.**

YOU HEEDED NOT THE **WORDS** OF A GODDESS---

NOW FEEL HER **POWERS** INSTEAD!

BUT JOHNNY IS **OBLIVIOUS** TO ALL BUT HIS OWN **ANXIETY**--

CRYS, DIABLO IS **USING** YOU AND THESE **PEOPLE** FOR SOME END OF HIS **OWN!**

YOU MUST **SEE** THAT! TRY TO **REMEMB**--

THEN, THE *WORDS* OF THE TORCH ARE DROWNED WITH HIS *FLAME*---

AND, LIKE A WOUNDED *BIRD*---

-- HE IS DASHED TO EARTH BY THE *TORRENT.*

A STRANGE THING! HE DENIES OUR GODDESS IS *REAL.* YET, IF SHE WERE *NOT*---

HOW COULD ONE SUCH AS *HE* BE DEFEATED?

BUT THERE ARE *OTHERS* WHO DOUBT THE GODDESS-- AS IN TERRA VERDE'S *ROYAL PALACE*--

WHERE SUCH UNBELIEVERS ARE ABOUT TO BE *VISITED* BY IXCHEL'S SELF-APPOINT ED *PRIEST*--

..DIABLO!

CARLOS! *BEHIND* YOU -- AN *INTRUDER!*

B-BUT TO GET THROUGH THE OUTER *DEFENSES* --IT IS *IMPOSSIBLE!*

THAT *WORD* HAS NO MEANING TO THE MASTER OF *ALCHEMY,* DOLTS.

ESPECIALLY SINCE I CONTROL *LOCKJAW,* THE INHUMAN GIRL'S *PET*-- AND HIS *TELE-PORTATIONAL POWERS!*

EQUALLY MEANINGLESS ARE YOUR *WEAPONS.*

WITH ONE SMALL *PELLET* REMOVED FROM MY *GLOVE*--

-- I RELEASE A *CHEMICAL POTION* TO PARALYZE YOUR *NERVOUS SYSTEMS!*

QUICK. *EFFICIENT.*

FOR MY INTEREST IS NOT *YOU,* BUT *BIGGER* GAME --*GENERAL ROBLES!*

LUIS? CARLOS! DO I HEAR A STRANGE VOICE OUT THERE?

EH? WHY DO YOU TWO NOT ANSWER YOUR GENERAL? I--

MADRE DE MÍ! WHAT HAS HAPPENED?!

SIMPLICITY ITSELF, MY DEAR ROBLES. THE REVOLUTION IS OVER--

--AND YOU HAVE LOST.

W-WHAT? WHO ARE YOU?!

DIABLO, YOU FAT WORM! THE MAN WHO WILL REPLACE YOU AS RULER OF TERRA VERDE!

THE MAN WHO HAS RESTORED THE SACRED RUINS OF YOUR PEOPLE, AND BROUGHT TO LIFE THEIR LEGENDARY GODDESS--

--SO THE GULLIBLE FOOLS NOW FIGHT TO THE DEATH IN MY BEHALF!

ALREADY YOUR AIR FORCE HAS FALLEN-- THE REST IS A MATTER OF TIME. BUT I GROW IMPATIENT FOR THE END---

AND COME NOW FOR YOUR SURRENDER!

N-NO--! THE PEASANTS WILL KILL ME FOR THE WAY I HAVE TREATED THEM.

REFUSE, AND YOU'LL WISH THEY HAD!

I NEED THIS COUNTRY! AS A SOURCE OF RARE CHEMICALS-- AND TO GIVE ME A POWER BASE IN THE WORLD EQUAL TO DR. DOOM'S!

FOR ONLY THEN CAN I RISK AVENGING MYSELF UPON THE LORD OF LATVERIA!*

S-SEÑOR DIABLO-- PERHAPS I WAS HASTY--

*FOR DEEDS DONE IN MARVEL SUPER-HEROES #20. --S.

PERHAPS INDEED, MY GENERAL! BUT YOU SHALL MAKE AMENDS-- WHEN LOCKJAW TAKES US TO THE MEETING PLACE OF MY REVOLUTIONARIES--

--THE RESTORED *TEMPLE* OF THE GODDESS, *IXCHEL!*

FOR *HERE*, YOU WILL ANNOUNCE SURRENDER TO *ME* IN HER BEHALF.

YOU'VE DONE *ENOUGH* ON CRYSTAL'S BEHALF---

--FROM *HERE* ON, POINTY EARS, IT'S STRICTLY *UNDOING* TIME!

THE TORCH!

SO MY LITTLE GODDESS DID NOT PUT YOU *TOTALLY* OUT OF COMMISSION.

VERY *WELL*--

SINCE I *OBSERVED* THAT SCENE FROM MY LAB--

--THERE WAS JUST TIME TO *PREPARE* SOMETHING IN THE EVENT YOU *DID* RECOVER!

PELLET EXPLODING--!

SHOOTING OUT SOME KINDA *FOAM*--

I-IT'S *GROWING*-- *HARDENING*--!

IT'LL *SMOTHER* MY FLAME--

UNLESS--

-- I EXERT *FULL POWER* FOR A BLAST OF *NOVA INTENSITY*--

--TO *SHATTER* IT BEFORE IT *COVERS* ME!

THE YOUTH HAS *IMPROVED* IN ABILITY SINCE MY EARLY BATTLES WITH THE *FANTASTIC FOUR.*

AND THOUGH HE MAY NOT *KNOW* IT---

TIME NOW FAVORS *HIM.*

BUT THE DIVERSION I WAS *HOPING* FOR NOW *ARRIVES--*

IXCHEL! THE FLAMING ONE HAS ATTACKED YOUR *PRIEST!*

AVENGE ME! AVENGE ME!

CRYS! DON'T *LISTEN* TO HIM-- *PLEASE!*

SO! YOUR *ARROGANCE* PERSISTS!

YOU OBSERVED THE *DIRECTION* I TOOK AND FLEW AHEAD TO COMMIT *FURTHER* BLASPHEMIES.

KNOW THEN THE *FULL* WRATH OF IXCHEL-- UNRELENTING, *UNRESTRAINED!*

THA-WOM!

SHE *MEANS* IT!

AND IF JUST *ONE* ELEMENTAL BLAST *CONNECTS--*

I'M *PERMANENTLY* OUT OF BUSINESS!

BUT HOW CAN I FIGHT THE GIRL I *LOVE--?*

HOW?!

EXCELLENT! THE GIRL KEEPS HIM AT *BAY--* BUYING THE TIME I NEED TO REACH MY *LABORATORY.*

THE POTIONS THAT HOLD HER IN MY *CONTROL* -- THAT RESTORED THESE *RUINS--* MUST EVER BE *RENEWED.*

AND THE *HOUR* FOR THAT ACT OF ALCHEMY IS *AGAIN* AT HAND!

I'D HOPED TO HAVE ROBLES ANNOUNCE HIS SURRENDER *BEFORE* THIS, BUT SINCE THE FAT FOOL *FLED* IN THE EXCITEMENT, I MUST---

=UNGGHHH!=

WHA-LAM!

W-WHAT?!

IT'S AS THOUGH SOME *INVISIBLE BARRIER* BLOCKED THE TEMPLE ENTRANCE!

WAIT--!

THERE IN THE *SKY*-- AN *AIRCRAFT*--!

THE FAMOUS *POGO PLANE* OF THE *FANTASTIC FOUR!*

THEN IT WAS THE *FORCE FIELD* OF THE ONE CALLED THE *INVISIBLE GIRL* WHICH STOPPED ME!

FOLLOWERS OF *IXCHEL*--!

MORE ENEMIES OF OUR GODDESS ARRIVE!

FIGHT THEM-- *ATTACK* THEM!

=*SHEESH!*= YA'D THINK IF AGATHA HARKNESS'S *MYSTIC POWERS* COULD TIP US OFF TO WHERE *TORCHY* IS---

THEY'DA HINTED ABOUT THAT *MOB* RUSHIN' US,TOO!

WE'LL USE THE *PLAN* I SUGGESTED AS WE WERE *LANDING*, BEN.

SUE AND I CAN KEEP THE *CROWD* BUSY.

BUT DOING IT SO NEITHER *THEY* NOR *WE* GET HURT---

--MAY NOT BE AS *SIMPLE* AS YOU MADE IT *SOUND*, DARLING!

THAT MAKES YOU MY MEAT, FANCY BRITCHES!

MY LAST PELLET!

AND ITS CORROSIVE MISTS HAVE NO EFFECT ON THAT ROCK-BOUND HIDE OF YOURS!

TIME IS RUNNING OUT!

ANOTHER MUST DO MY FIGHTING FOR ME--

LOCKJAW-- ATTACK!

=UFFFFFF!=

GIDDOFF ME, YA NIGHTMARE-SIZE RIN TIN TIN!

DO I HAFTA CLOBBER YA BEFORE YA SEE I AIN'T NO BOWL OF ALPO?!

MEANTIME, THE MISTRESS OF THE MONSTROUS MASTIFF CONTINUES HER PURSUIT OF JOHNNY STORM---

BLASTS KEEP GETTING CLOSER!

AND AFTER THAT NOVA BURST AN' ALL THE FLYING, MY FLAME'S WEAKENING--

CRYS, CAN'T YOU FIGHT WHATEVER POTION DIABLO GAVE YOU? TRY TO REMEMBER ME-- OUR LOVE--?

AND SUDDENLY, THE LOVELY ELEMENTAL--

HESITATES---

AND AS THOUGH A CUE--

--THE MOMENT, THE MOOD, SEEMS TO SWEEP ALL AROUND.

THEN, AS A BODY, THEY TURN, STILL AND STARING, TOWARD THE TEMPLE OF IXCHEL---

AI DE MÍ!

REED--!

IT'S ALL *CRUMBLED*, DECAYED-- OVERRUN BY *JUNGLE!* BUT JUST *MOMENTS* AGO--

DIABLO'S POTION HAS *WORN OFF!*

IT IS AS THE *YOUNG ONE* TRIED TO TELL --THE PRIEST WAS *FALSE!*

AND AS THE PEOPLE OF TERRA VERDE AWAKE TO THE *ILLUSION*, THE DECEPTION---

--SO DOES A *GODDESS* AWAKE TO BEING ONCE MORE A *GIRL*. A GIRL CALLED---

CRYSTAL!

J-JOHNNY--? IS IT *REALLY* YOU--? I FEEL *SO STRANGE*-- CONFUSED AND *WEAK*---

THEN LEAN ON *ME*, PRETTY GIRL-- IT'S GREAT HAVING YOU *BACK*. MAYBE I CAN EXPLAIN THE WHOLE *NIGHTMARE*.

LATER, JOHNNY. FOR *NOW*--JUST HOLD ME, *HOLD* ME.

BUT WITHIN THE RUINED TEMPLE, THE *AUTHOR* OF CRYSTAL'S NIGHTMARE CREATES *ANEW*---

IT'S *TOO LATE* TO REPAIR THE DAMAGE DONE---

ONLY TIME FOR ONE *LAST POTION*.

THE MOST *POTENT* AND *POWERFUL* OF MY ALCHEMIST'S ART!

THE TIME FOR *SUBTLETY* IS PAST. IF THERE IS HOPE FOR *VICTORY*, IT LIES IN DESTROYING *ALL* WHO OPPOSE ME.

--DESTROYING-- THEM NOW!

ANY HOPE SO *POWERFUL*---

--SHOULD NOT BE *YOURS*, SEÑOR DIABLO, BUT *MINE!*

AS *TERRA VERDE* WAS MINE BEFORE YOU *INTERFERED!*

ALL I'VE LOST CAN BE *REGAINED*--- THE PEASANTS WILL AGAIN *CRINGE* BEFORE ME---

I MUST *HAVE* IT--I *MUST!*

ROBLES! YOU IN-CREDIBLE *MADMAN!*

IS A *LOADED WEAPON* GIVEN TO A *CHILD?*

NO HANDS BUT *DIABLO'S* CAN PROPERLY *WIELD* SUCH A FORCE---

AND *NO* COMIC-OPERA TYRANT CAN WREST IT *FROM* ME!

I HAVE HIDDEN AND WAITED---AND *SEEN!*

WITHOUT YOUR *POTIONS*, YOUR *PELLETS*-- YOU ARE NO BETTER THAN *I.*

YOU ARE BUT A *MAN* IN AN OUTLANDISH *COSTUME*--

--AND *ALL* MEN ARE *VULNERABLE!*

UNGHHH!

NO, YOU FOOL! YOU'VE MADE ME *DROP* IT!

IF IT HITS MY *OTHER* CHEMICALS--

FREEZE THE MOMENT IN *TIME*--- EXAMINE IT FROM *ANOTHER* ASPECT---

FOR, AS THE FLASK FALLS *WITHIN* THE TEMPLE-- *WITHOUT,* FOUR FIGURES RACE UP CRUMBLING STEPS OF STONE.

REED, *BEN* SHOULD HAVE REAPPEARED WITH *DIABLO* BY NOW!

I *KNOW,* SUE--

BUT IT'S *LIKE* THAT ALCHEMIST TO HAVE ONE LAST TRICK *NO ONE* COUNTED ON!

I *ALREADY* OWE THAT CREEP FOR BUGGING *CRYSTAL.*

IF HE'S HARMED MY BLUE-EYED BUDDY, THE *THING*---

THEN---

THAT *SHAKING-- TREMBLING--!*

IT *FEELS* LIKE---

DOWN THE STAIRS! EVERY-BODY BACK *DOWN* BEFORE---

FTOOM!

BUT WHEN THE SOUND AND FURY *FADE*-- WHEN THE DENSE SWIRL OF DEBRIS *CLEARS*---

SIS, THERE MAY BE SUPER-HEROES WITH *FLASHIER* POWERS---

STILL, I'LL TAKE THAT *FORCE-FIELD* OF YOURS *ANY* DAY!

BUT THE *TEMPLE* -- THERE'S NOTHING *LEFT--!*

ANYONE *INSIDE* IT-- INCLUDING *BEN*-- MUST BE-- BE--

WAIT! THAT STRANGE *GLOW* FORMING ABOVE THE RUBBLE---

BEN-- AND *LOCK-JAW!*

WHO *ELSE'D* BE NUTTY ENOUGH TA *TRAVEL* THIS WAY?

THE POOCH CAME TO HIS *SENSES* JUST BEFORE EVERYTHING WENT *BALOOEY* AN' TELEPORTED US RIGHT OUTTA THE *SCENE*.

IT SAVED OUR *SKINS*-- BUT IF I GET A *CHOICE*, NEXT TIME I GO *GREYHOUND!* *

WELL, IT'S ALL OVER *NOW*, BIG FELLA--- AND FOR SOME *GOOD!* WHATEVER DIABLO'S *INTENTIONS*---

HE'S LEFT TERRA VERDE FREE FROM *ANY* DICTATOR'S YOKE --INCLUDING HIS *OWN!*

*LEARN *WHY* BEN FEELS LIKE THIS IN A SPECIAL FEATURE FOLLOWING *THIS* ONE. --- STAN.

AND HE'S LEFT YOU AND ME TOGETHER *AT LAST*, CRYS--

B-BUT JOHNNY, FROM WHAT YOU JUST *TOLD* ME---

ABOUT MY MAD COUSIN, *MAXIMUS*, REGAINING CONTROL OF THE INHUMANS' *GREAT REFUGE*---

YOU MUST KNOW I CAN'T *STAY*-- THAT I MUST JOIN *BLACK BOLT* AND THE *REST* OF OUR ROYAL FAMILY IN TRYING TO SAVE OUR *HOMELAND!*

I *KNOW*, CRYS-- AND I UNDERSTAND. BUT AT LEAST WE'VE GOT THIS *TIME*, THIS *MOMENT*---

AND UNTIL THERE'LL BE *OTHERS*, I CAN *WAIT*--- AND REMEMBER *THIS*.

FINIS

NEXT *THE PANTHER RETURNS!*

STAN LEE, EDITOR • ***ARCHIE GOODWIN,*** WRITER • ***JOHN BUSCEMA,*** ARTIST • ***JIM MOONEY,*** INKER • ***SAM ROSEN,*** LETTERER
EXPLORE AN INSTANT IN ***TIME.*** AN INSTANT FROM THE PRECEDING STORY WHEN THE ***THING*** AND ***LOCKJAW*** TELEPORTED OUT OF AN ***EXPLOSION,*** AND FOR ITS ***DURATION*** ARE THRUST INTO---

WHAT MAD WORLD?

WHAT'VE YA ***DONE,*** YA NUTTY POOCH?

ONE MINUTE A ***MAYAN TEMPLE*** IS BLOWIN' UP ON US---

NOW WE'RE IN ***THIS*** PLACE!

AN' IT SURE AIN'T ***CENTRAL AMERICA*** OR THE ***20TH CENTURY!***

LOOKS LIKE A LEFTOVER ***SET*** FROM ***WEREWOLF OF LONDON!***

AND THOUGH NOT ***CORRECT,*** THAT THOUGHT IS CLOSER TO ***TRUTH*** THAN BEN GRIMM ***KNOWS***---

SNIK!

BUT THE ***DANGER*** IN THIS DARKNESS AND THICKLY CHOKING FOG IS ***NOT*** SUPER-NATURAL---

---THOUGH NO LESS ***DEADLY!***

WHAT IN--?!

YOU HAVE BEEN ***CARELESS,*** MY DEAR HOLMES---

ONE *CURARE PELLET* FROM MY AIR GUN HAS IMMOBILIZED YOUR *HOUND*. A *SECOND* SHALL DO FAR *WORSE* TO YOU

IRONIC, NO? THIS TIME *MORIARITY* SPRINGS THE TRAP AND *HOLMES* FALLS VICTIM!

YEAH?

PAL, MAYBE *YOU'VE* FREAKED OUT ON *ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE*---

BUT I AIN'T NO *BASIL RATHBONE!*

ANY TALKIN' OR DEDUCTIN' *I* DO---

--COMES *AFTER* MY CLOBBERIN'!

DUNNO WHY YA WANTED TA PLAY *BADDIE* IN SOME *SHERLOCK HOLMES* GAME, FELLA, BUT---

=*SHEESH!*= IT *AIN'T* A GUY-- IT'S SOME KINDA *ROBOT*---

B-BUT THE *FACE!* --IT'S *REED'S!*

CAN'T *FIGGER* IT--AN' I AIN'T SO SURE I *WANNA*.

BETTER JUST TRY TA *REVIVE* LOCKJAW AN' GET *OUTTA*---

HE'S *GONE!*

WITHOUT THAT TELEPORTIN' PUP, I'M *TRAPPED* IN THIS CRAZY BURG!

I DUNNO *WHO'S* PULLIN' *WHAT* AROUND HERE---

KRRRUNCH!

BUT IF CRYSTAL'S EVER-LOVIN' *PET* AIN'T HANDED *RIGHT BACK*--

YA BETTER *BELIEVE* I'M GONNA RIP UP *REAL ESTATE* UNTIL I *FIND* 'IM!

HUH?!

LOCKSLEY, YOU VARLET! YOU'VE COME ONCE TOO OFTEN TO NOTTINGHAM CASTLE!

THIS VISIT YOU'LL DINE ON THE HIGH SHERIFF'S STEEL!

AT 'IM, MEN! SLAY THE OUTLAW ROGUE!

SLAY THE BANDIT ROBIN HOOD!

'SCUSE THE TABLE, FELLAS, BUT I DIDN'T BRING MY BOW AN' ARROW!

THEY'RE ALL A BUNCHA ROBOTS-- LIKE THAT FIRST ONE.

AN' THE MAIN BAD GUY HAS STRETCHO'S KISSER AGAIN!

MEBBE THIS DOOR LEADS OUTTA THIS LOONEY BIN---

OH NO! ANOTHER SCENE STRAIGHT FROM THE LATE SHOW!

GENERAL STORE

WE BEEN WAITIN' FER YUH, EARP.

US CLANTONS ARE GONNA SETTLE WHO RUNS TOMBSTONE, MARSHAL!
O.K. CORRAL
T-THEY'RE ALL STRETCH--!
I'VE STEPPED INTA SOME CRAZY DISNEYLAND ENACTIN' OLD LEGENDS-- WITH REED AS VILLAIN IN 'EM ALL!
HEY! WHAT IN THE NAME'A AUNT PETUNIA'S HAPPENIN' NOW?!
UFFFFFFFFF!
FORGIVE THIS UN-CEREMONIOUS WELCOME, BEN GRIMM--
AND MY DELAY IN BRINGING YOU TO ME.
WHUMP!
BUT I HAVE BEEN TESTING YOUR PET TO LEARN WHERE YOU CAME FROM-- AND WHY.
DO NOT FEAR. HE IS UNHURT.
WELL, THAT WON'T BE TRUE FOR YOU, CUDDLES--
ONCE I SMASH MY WAY THROUGH THIS GLA--- OWWW!
IT IS COMPLETELY SHATTERPROOF, MR. GRIMM---
EVEN AGAINST YOUR POWER.
BE GLAD IT IS, BUSTER-- 'CAUSE I GOT YOU FIGGERED! YA GOT IT IN FER REED, SO YA GET YER COOKIES OFF RUNNIN' THROUGH THIS LITTLE FUN-HOUSE ---
--PLAYIN' HERO, AN' MAKIN' HIM THE HEAVY.
YES. YOU STUMBLED INTO MY OWN PRIVATE AND BITTER FORM OF AMUSEMENT. BUT UPON SEEING ME--
KLIK!
WON'T YOU GRANT I'VE REASON TO HATE REED RICHARDS?

OHMIGOSH! HOW THE HECK CAN IT BE?

WHEN LOCKJAW TELEPORTED, YOU CROSSED A DIMENSIONAL BARRIER TO HERE-- AN ALTERNATE UNIVERSE!

ONE SHOCKINGLY SIMILAR TO YOUR OWN--YET AMAZING IN ITS DIFFERENCES.

"HERE, FOR INSTANCE, THE FATAL TRIP INTO SPACE THAT PRODUCED THE FANTASTIC FOUR IN YOUR WORLD, WAS MADE ONLY BY TWO--

"REED RICHARDS, WHO INSISTED ON DOING IT; BEN GRIMM, WHO RELUCTANTLY ASSISTED.

"THE COSMIC RAYS THAT BOMBARDED THE SPACE CRAFT WERE THE SAME-- BUT THE EFFECT ON THE OCCUPANTS FAR DIFFERENT!"

"YEAH," SAYS BEN, "I CAN TELL JUST BY LISTENIN' TO YA TALK, PAL."

BUT IF YA CAME OUT GENIUS ENOUGH TA BUILD ALL THIS, WHAT'S THE GRIPE?

I WUZ BITTER AT REED TOO, BUT YA LEARN TO ACCEPT LOOKIN' LIKE THIS. IT AIN'T STOPPED MY GAL ALICIA FROM CARIN'!

KLAK!

I AM RELEASING YOU, MR. GRIMM.

LOCKJAW IS REGAINING CONSCIOUSNESS. YOU'LL BE ABLE TO LEAVE.

AS YOU SEE ON THE SCANNER, GUESTS ARE ARRIVING. I PREFER YOU DEPARTED BEFORE THEY'RE INSIDE.

HEY! IT'S THE POGO PLANE!

CORRECT. IT IS MY FELLOW SUPERHERO, MR. FANTASTIC-- AND HIS LOVELY WIFE.

THEY SOMETIMES VISIT ME HERE ON MY ISLAND OF SOLITUDE.

YOU CAN SEE MR. FANTASTIC HAS CONSIDERABLY *MORE* POWERS IN *MY* UNIVERSE.

BUT HE'S STILL A *CORNBALL!* ZOOMIN' DOWN TA IMPRESS *SUZIE* AN'---

WAIT! THAT AIN'T *REED!* IT'S *M-ME*-- ME THE WAY I *USED* TA BE BEFORE -- BEFORE---

YES. IN *THIS* WORLD, MR. FANTASTIC IS *BEN GRIMM!*

YA MEAN--YA MEAN *YOU'RE* REED RICHARDS?!

THE MAN WHO *INSISTED* ON THAT SPACE VOYAGE. THE MAN WHO MADE HIMSELF A *THING*--

--AND LOST THE WOMAN HE *LOVED* TO HIS *BEST FRIEND!*

PERHAPS NOW YOU *UNDERSTAND* THE SAD, BITTER *CHARADES* I STAGE ON MY SOLITARY ISLAND.

NOW GO *QUICKLY*, BEN GRIMM--BEFORE MY *ENVY* OF YOU AND THE ALTERNATE UNIVERSE YOU ARE FROM *OVERWHELMS* ME.

GO AND REMEMBER THAT *HERE* THERE HAS NEVER BEEN AN *ALICIA* TO CONSOLE A MAN TURNED MONSTER!

THUS, BACK IN HIS *OWN* WORLD, WHEN BEN IS QUESTIONED ABOUT *WHERE* HIS TELEPORTATIONAL TRIP WITH LOCKJAW TOOK HIM---

YOU TWO LOVEBIRDS WOULDN'T *BELIEVE* IT. IN FACT, I AIN'T EVEN SURE *I* DO!

AN' MEBBE IT'S *BETTER* THAT WAY!

FINIS

FANTASTIC FOUR

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

FANTASTIC FOUR

T'CHALLA'S CHAINED UP IN THERE... AND WE'RE GONNA GET HIM OUT!

YOU BETTER BELIEVE IT, HOT-HEAD...

..'CAUSE IT'S CLOBBERING TIME!!

THREE STAND TOGETHER.. OR DIE!

THE FABULOUS F.F. BATTLE FOR THE EARTH--AND FOR THE SOUL OF MAN!

THREE STOOD TOGETHER!

AN ARCHETYPICAL AUTUMN AFTERNOON: THEN SUDDENLY, THE BLISSFUL NOVEMBER QUIET IS RUDELY INTERRUPTED BY--

BEN-- FOR PETE'S SAKE-- CUT IT OUT!

NOT FOR PETE'S SAKE-- NOT FOR ANYBODY'S!

YOU'VE HAD IT, JUNIOR!

THRAK!

STAN LEE * EDITOR | ROY THOMAS * WRITER | JOHN BUSCEMA ARTIST

JOE SINNOTT INKER | ARTIE SIMEK LETTERER

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NOW YOU'VE DONE IT, YOU OVER-GROWN GORILLA.

THAT HUNK OF GRANITE MIGHT'VE MISSED ME--

--BUT IT'S NOT GONNA BE SO OBLIGING TO THE CROWDS IN THE STREET BELOW!

SPKAK

ONLY CHANCE-- IS TO MELT IT BEFORE IT FALLS--LIKE SO.

'COURSE, THAT STILL LEAVES THE LITTLE MATTER OF A RAIN OF MOLTEN LAVA--

--WHICH IS DEFINITELY HAZARDOUS TO SOMEBODY'S HEALTH.

BUT, A FEW WELL-AIMED FIRE-BALLS--

--SHOULD FUNNEL IT INTO THOSE HUGE INDUSTRIAL CHIMNEYS--

--WHERE THE COMBINED HEAT WILL TURN THE WHOLE MISH-MOSH TO ASHES, FASTER THAN YOU CAN SAY CHIMNEY-SWEEP.

OR, IF IT DOESN'T, IT'LL BE THE FIRST TIME THE AIR POLLUTED A FACTORY!

AND, NOW THAT THAT'S TAKEN CARE OF, GRUESOME--

--I'M GONNA MAKE YOU REGRET YOU EVER STARTED THIS FREE-FOR-ALL.

YOU GOT IT ALL BACK-WARD, MATCH-HEAD.

IT WAS YOU STARTED THIS RHUBARB.

I'M JUST THE GUY WHO'S GONNA FINISH--

WHA--?

YOU CAN'T EVEN FINISH A SENTENCE, UGLY.

BUT NOW, I'M THRU PLAYING AROUND.

YOU'VE HAD THIS COMIN' FOR A LONG TIME, PAL, SO--

HUH? SOME-THING STOPPED MY FIRE-BLASTS!

JUST LIKE YER CHIN'S GONNA STOP MY FIST, KIDDO--

--'CAUSE IT'S CLOBBERIN'--

--TIME--!

AWRIGHT-- WHO'S THE WISE GUY?

WHO'S THE WISE GUY??

THRUNCH!

I AM, BEN! THIS IN-GROUP BICKERING IS SOMETHING WE CAN'T AFFORD--NOT NOW.

THANKS FOR BLOCKING JOHNNY'S FLAMES WITH YOUR FORCE FIELD, DARLING.

I'M JUST GLAD THERE WAS NO REAL HARM DONE, REED.

BENJAMIN GRIMM--HOW COULD YOU ENDANGER THE PEOPLE BELOW BY KNOCKING OUT THAT WALL SECTION?

AW, I KNEW YER BURNED-UP BABY BROTHER HERE'D MELT IT DOWN, SUZIE.

BUT HE SHOULDN'TA GIVEN ME A HOT-FOOT IN THE FIRST PLACE.

YEAH? WELL, I JUST DON'T HAPPEN TO LIKE YOUR BAD-MOUTHING MY GIRL CRYSTAL--AND THAT'S THAT!

HOLD IT, YOU TWO!

WORLD WAR THREE JUST ENDED, REMEMBER?

THAT'S EASY FOR YOU TA SAY, STRETCHO.

YOU AINT THE POOR SLOB WHO'LL HAVETA CLEAN UP THIS WHOLE BLAMED MESS!

WHEN IT COMES TO THAT-- NEITHER ARE YOU, BEN.

WE'LL LET AUNTIE TAKE CARE OF IT.

AUNTIE? IF YOU'VE TURNED MY DEAR OL' AUNT PETUNIA INTO A DAY-LABORER, I'LL--

HUHN??

WHAT ON EARTH--?

GENTLEMEN, SAY A VERY QUICK HELLO TO "AUNTIE"--

--AUTOMATIC NEURO-ROBOT IN CHARGE OF TIDYING-UP WITH INCREASED EFFICIENCY.

HOLY COW! THAT NEW GIZMO OF REED'S IS PICKING UP THE WRECKAGE EVEN FASTER THAN I COULD MELT IT DOWN.

HE'S LIABLE TA MAKE US BOTH OBSOLETE, HOT-HEAD.

OR ELSE MAYBE EXTINCT.

GANGWAY!

I BELIEVE AUNTIE HAS THE SITUATION WELL IN HAND.

NOW, COME WITH ME TO THE LAB, YOU TWO-- AND STEP LIVELY!

LOOK, IF YER GONNA LECTURE AT US AGAIN, PLASTIC SAM, YOU CAN SAVE YER BREATH, 'CAUSE--

IT'S SOMETHING FAR MORE IMPORTANT THAN THAT, BEN.

I'D JUST RECEIVED AN URGENT VIZEO-CALL WHEN YOU TWO STARTED ROUGH-HOUSING.

I LEFT THE CHIEF ADVISOR OF OUR FRIEND T'CHALLA-- ON HOLD!

T'CHALLA? WHAT'S THE BLACK PANTHER'S NUMBER-TWO HONCHO WANT WITH US?

THAT'S WHAT WE JUST MAY LEARN, OLD BUDDY--IF YOU'LL KEEP STILL A MOMENT.

I'M SORRY, SIR. AS YOU WERE SAYING--?

IT IS RATHER I WHO SHOULD APOLOGIZE, REED RICHARDS--

--FOR TROUBLING *YOU* WITH WHAT WOULD ORDINARILY BE AN INTERNAL MATTER *OUR TRIBE* COULD HANDLE.

BUT, THIS IS *HARDLY* AN ORDINARY SITUATION--AS I TRUST YOU'LL SOON AGREE.

WE'RE ALL EARS, TAKU. PROCEED.

GAZE CAREFULLY UPON THE FEATURES OF THESE *TWO MEN*, YOU WHO ARE THE SWORN *BLOOD-BROTHERS* OF THE WAKANDA TRIBE.

UPON YOUR *FINDING* THEM...AND FINDING THEM *QUICKLY*... MAY DEPEND THE FATE OF THE *WORLD*.

NATHAN KUMALO

ALLOW ME TO *ELABO-RATE*...

JETH ROBARDS

*"ONLY A FEW DAYS PAST, A SMALL **PRIVATE PLANE** CRASH-LANDED AMID THE JUNGLE WHICH SURROUNDS OUR DOME-HIDDEN LAND...ITS TWO OCCUPANTS **UNSCATHED**, BUT SEEMINGLY SHAKEN.*

*"SUCH IS OUR CHIEFTAIN'S **KINDNESS**, THAT HE DEFIED ALL CONVENTION--AND BROUGHT THEM INTO OUR **MIDST** TO RECOVER...*

*"THAT SELFSAME NIGHT, IN A MANNER WHICH CAN ONLY HAVE BEEN **CAREFULLY PLANNED**, THEY REPAID THAT KINDNESS BY **STEALING** A DEVICE WHICH OUR KING HAD RECENTLY DEVELOPED... A DEVICE CALLED THE **VIBROTRON**...*

*"...AN INSTRUMENT WHICH WILL GREATLY **AUGMENT** THE POWER OF OUR LAND'S GREATEST RESOURCE... **VIBRANIUM!***

*"WITH IT THEY **FLED** INTO THE JUNGLE...*

A RANDOM PHRASE, OVER-HEARD BY THE *GUARD* THEY FELLED, REVEALED THEIR INTENT TO *SELL* THE VIBROTRON TO SOMEONE WHO WOULD MEET THEM IN NEIGHBORING *RUDYARDA*.

GREAT T'CHALLA *PURSUED* THEM THERE...*ALONE*.

THAT WAS... *TWO DAYS* AGO.

SINCE THAT TIME... WE'VE HAD *NO WORD* FROM HIM.

SOUNDS *FISHY*, AWRIGHT. BUT YOU WAKANDAS AINT EXACTLY A *BACKWARD NATION*, Y'KNOW.

HOW COME YOU COME CRYIN' TO *US*, 'STEADA CHARGIN' AFTER THE PANTHER *YERSELVES*?

YOU WOULD NOT *ASK* SUCH AN ILL-CONSIDERED QUESTION, BEN GRIMM--

--IF YOU WERE WELL-VERSED IN THE *HISTORY* OF THE REPUBLIC OF *RUDYARDA*--

THAT NATION IS ONE OF THE LAST REMAINING STRONGHOLDS OF *WHITE SUPREMACY* UPON OUR CONTINENT.

ONE OF *MY* COLOR CAN FUNCTION THERE ONLY WITH... *DIFFICULTY.*

OH YEAH... I READ ABOUT THAT PLACE, BUT I *FERGOT.*

YOU CAN *AFFORD* TO FORGET IT. MY PEOPLE *CANNOT.*

EVEN OUR *MONARCH,* TRAVELING INCOGNITO AS HE IS, MAY HAVE RUN INTO *TROUBLE.*

SAY NO MORE. WE'LL INVESTIGATE *AT ONCE.*

THEN, THAT IS ALL...*FOR NOW.*

...JOHNNY...BEN... I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF SOME IMPORTANT *EXPERIMENTS* RIGHT NOW. SO, IF *YOU TWO* COULD...

WE'LL LOOK INTO IT FOR YA--*RIGHT,* KID?

SURE, REED. AFTER ALL...

...WE WOULDN'T WANT YOUR *TEST TUBES* TO GET RUSTY.

...DARLING, I'M VERY *WORRIED* ABOUT JOHNNY.

HE'S SO SULLEN... SO *MOROSE.*

IF ONLY YOU COULD *TELL* HIM...ABOUT YOUR *PROJECT...*

AND RISK *DASHING* HIS HOPES, AS SOON AS I'VE *RAISED* THEM?

I DON'T *DARE,* SUE. YOU KNOW THAT.

YES...I DO. I'M SORRY. I *SHOULDN'T* HAVE...

FORGET IT, DEAR. BUT IF I DON'T SUCCEED-- IF I DON'T FIND A WAY TO HELP CRYSTAL LIVE AMONG *HUMANS* AGAIN--

IF THIS LATEST LEAD IS JUST ANOTHER *BLIND ALLEY--*

--SHE'LL BE *LOST* TO JOHNNY-- *FOREVER!*

AND NOW: TWO UNSUSPECTING SOULS ABOARD A JETLINER BOUND FOR AFRICA...

C'MON, TORCHY... I ALREADY *TOLD* YA I DIDN'T MEAN THAT CRACK ABOUT YER TRUE LOVE, DIDN'T I?

I WAS JUST TRYIN' TO CHEER YOU UP --AND *RILED* YA, INSTEAD.

IT'S NOT THAT, BEN. I JUST CAN'T STOP *THINKING* ABOUT CRYSTAL,

MAYBE I SHOULD GO TO *HER--* IN THE *HIDDEN LAND--*

TWO MILES ABOVE SEA LEVEL, IN THE MIDDLE'A *NOWHERE CITY?*

FACE *FACTS,* KID. IN THREE WEEKS, YOU'D BE *CRAWLIN' THE WALLS,* AN'--

LISTEN TO ME, *ALL* OF YOU! THIS PLANE IS BEING *TAKEN OVER--NOW!*

OH *NO!* IF THAT'S WHAT I *THINK* IT IS--

IT *IS!*

A *SKYJACKING!*

JUST SIT *STILL* EVERYBODY-- AND NOBODY GETS *HURT!*

THE LITTLE LADY AN' ME ARE TAKIN' A WALK *UP FRONT*--AND THEN THIS CRATE IS HEADING FOR *CUBA*--

--OR *ELSE!*

DON'T TRY TO *STOP* HIM, ANY OF YOU!

HE *MEANS* WHAT HE SAYS--AND HE'S GOT A *GUN!*

DON'T WANT TO *ENDANGER* THE STEW--BUT IF I CAN JUST EDGE IN A BIT *CLOSER*--

NOW *CALM DOWN,* FELLA. LET'S TALK THIS *OVER*--!

TAKE ONE MORE *STEP,* BRAT, AND I START THROWIN' *HOT LEAD!*

ZPAK!

YOU *WANT* HOT LEAD--?

YOU *ASKED* FOR THIS, PAL.

--YOU *GOT* HOT LEAD!

YEEEOW! MY ROD--*MELTED*-- LIKE IT WAS MADE OUTTA *BUTTER!*

DON'T KNOW HOW YOU *DID* THAT, HOUDINI--

BUT I GOT *ANOTHER* ACE UP MY SLEEVE--

AN' *THIS* ONE, NO MAGICIAN'S-TRICK IS GONNA *MELT!*

WHA--? A GRENADE!

IF I DON'T GET TO CUBA, AINT NOBODY IN THIS PLANE GOIN' NOWHERE!

AND I DO MEAN NOWH-- HUH?

GIMME THAT PINE-APPLE, CREEP, BEFORE I--

UH OH!

YOU'RE TOO LATE, BIG BOY! TOO LATE!

KLUNK!

I DON'T DARE USE A FIRE-BLAST ON THAT THING, OR IT'LL BLOW A HOLE IN THE BOTTOM OF THE PLANE.

OUR ONLY HOPE IS--

BEN!

I HEAR YA, SPORT. I HEAR YA.

HOW COME, SOON AS IT'S CRISIS TIME...

...EVERYBODY'S BASHFUL BENJY'S BUDDY AGAIN!

FROOM!

AS FOR YOU, BUSTER--IF I WASN'T SCARED'A DENTIN' THE PLANE, I'D--

SAVE YOUR BREATH. CAN'T YOU SEE HE'S JUST A CRAZED FANATIC?

THOUGH, IF THERE'S ANYTHING LOWER THAN MENACING A PLANE-LOAD OF INNOCENT PEOPLE--

--I HOPE I NEVER LIVE TO SEE IT!

THEN, FOLLOWING A LESS EVENTFUL SECOND HALF OF THE TRIP...

COME ON, BEN... BEFORE WE GET HELP UP IN CUSTOMS.

I WAS JUST THANK-ING MR. GRIMM ONE LAST TIME...

SKIP IT, LADY. PLAYIN' HERO IS JUST LIKE A KNEE-JERK TO TORCHY AN' ME.

MOVE IT, BEN-- WE'VE GOT A MISSION HERE, REMEMBER?

YEAH, I REMEMBER, ALRIGHT.
ONLY, I'M SURE GLAD WE'RE HERE TA SAVE THE WHOLE BLAMED WORLD...
...AN' NOT JUST SOME PLACE THAT DIVIDES ITS OWN PEOPLE INTO "EUROPEANS" AND "COLOREDS"...
EUROPEANS
COLOREDS
...OR I THINK I'D JUST FERGIT THE WHOLE THING!

AIR
NOW WHAT IN BLAZES--?
THAT'S THE THIRD EMPTY CAB'S PASSED ME BY LIKE I WUZ A PLAGUE CASE, OR ELSE MAYBE--
MAYBE A BLACK MAN TRYING TO GET TO HARLEM, MR. G..?
COLOREDS
EUROPEANS
YEAH... SUMTHIN' LIKE THAT.
VROOM!

MAYBE I'LL JUST SLOW ONE OF 'EM DOWN A MITE...
...LET 'EM TAKE A CLOSER LOOK.
TAXI.
LORD! WHAT THE--?

SAY, I KNOW YOU. YOU'RE THE THING --ONE OF THE AMERICAN FANTASTIC FOUR.
HOP IN, SIR. SORRY I DIDN'T STOP AT FIRST, BUT I TOOK YOU FOR-- I MEAN--
JUST TAKE US WHERE WE TELL YA, FELLA, AN' SHUT YER YAP...
...BEFORE I GET SICK ALL OVER YER BUGGY.

NOW, KID, TELL ME SOMETHIN' PLEASANT, TO TAKE MY MIND OFF'A... THINGS.
T'CHALLA'S AIDE CALLED BACK, WHILE WE WERE PACKING...
LIKE WHERE WE'RE GOIN'... AN' HOW WE KNOW TO GO THERE.
...SAID HE'D FOUND THIS ADDRESS FOR THE MAN KUMALO. 'COURSE, MAYBE KUMALO NEVER WENT BACK THERE...
...BUT WE STILL GOTTA HAVE A LOOK-SEE, HUH?

ONE THING'S CERTAIN. IF HIM AN' ROBARDS SOLD THAT VIBRANIUM GIZMO ALREADY...
...THEY SURE AINT CASHED THE CHECK.

...WE'D LIKE TO *SPEAK* WITH YOU FOR A MOMENT, IF WE COULD, SIR.

YOU *ARE* MR. NATHAN KUMALO, AREN'T YOU?

THAT'S *HIM*, OKAY. I RECOGNIZE HIM FROM HIS *PITCHER*.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE *TALKING* ABOUT-- *EITHER* OF YOU.

NOW, GET AWAY FROM MY *DOOR*, BEFORE I--

BEFORE YOU *WHAT*, SEYMOUR?

YOU GONNA *CUT* YERSELF, AN' *BLEED* ALL OVER US?

PLEASE-- DON'T *HIT* ME--I--

I *KNOW* WHY YOU'RE HERE-- AND I'LL TELL YOU *EVERY-THING!*

YOU GIVE UP AWFUL *EASY*, PAL.

HOW COME?

BECAUSE MY PARTNER *DOUBLE-CROSSED* ME, THAT'S WHY!

HE *TOOK* THE INVENTION WE STOLE TOGETHER--AND, AS A BLACK, I CAN ONLY *FESTER* HERE, IN THIS *SINKHOLE*.

I *FEEL* FOR YA, BUDDY, BUT I CAN'T *REACH* YA.

SO WHO'S HE *SELLIN'* IT TO? *NAMES AN' DATES!*

EVEN *WE* DO NOT KNOW THE BUYER'S *IDENTITY*--BUT ROBARDS IS TO MEET HIM *TONIGHT*...

AT THE ABANDONED *METAL WORKS* ON THE EDGE OF THE CITY...

...AT *MIDNIGHT*.

YOU BETTER BE TELLIN' IT *STRAIGHT*, KUMALO.

NOW WHAT ABOUT *T'CHALLA*-- THE MAN YOU *BETRAYED*?

YOU WON'T BE SEEING *HIM* AGAIN SO SOON, AMERICANS.

HE'S ROTTING INSIDE *CITY PRISON* RIGHT THIS MINUTE...

...AND IT'S GOT WALLS *THREE FEET THICK!*

THEN, AS A STARTLED TWOSOME MULL OVER THAT LITTLE BOMBSHELL...

WELL, BEN? DO WE *BELIEVE* HIM, OR *DON'T* WE?

AW, HE'S TOO *CHICKEN* TO BE PUTTIN' US ON. I VOTE WE--

YOU'RE GOING TO DO *NOTHING*, EITHER OF YOU.!

I'VE TAKEN *ENOUGH* OFF WHITE MEN TO LAST ME A *LIFETIME*.

AND THAT'S WHY YOU'RE BOTH GOING TO *DIE*--

--RIGHT *HERE*, RIGHT *NOW*--IN THIS DINGY HOLE THAT *YOUR* KIND EXILED ME TO!

YER GONNA PUT THE *KIBOSH* ON AUNT PETUNIA'S FAVORITE *NEPHEW*?

--HERE, IN A PLACE AINT EVEN BEEN *CLEANED* IN A YEAR?

WHY, FACT IS, THIS WHOLE PLACE IS SO BLAMED *DUSTY*--THAT I'M PLUMB-- ABOUT--TO--

AAAAAA

CHOOOO

BLAM

DON'T BOTHER TO GIT *UP*, PAL. *WE* KNOW THE WAY OUT.

BUT IF YOU TOL' US ANY *TALL TALES*-- YOU BETTER START *PACKIN'*.

Y-YOU'RE-- NOT GOING TO--PUT ME IN *PRISON*--?

YOU'RE ALREADY *IN* ONE, KUMALO --OR HADN'T YOU *NOTICED*?

C'MON, BEN--

"--WE'VE GOT US A KING TO SET FREE--!"

THE HOUR GROWS LATE--IN EVERY WAY.

SOON, A MOST FORMIDABLE WEAPON WILL PASS INTO UNKNOWN, SINISTER HANDS...

AND THERE IS NOTHING WHICH T'CHALLA, SON OF T'CHAKA, CAN DO TO--

WAIT! THOSE SIRENS-- THE SOUNDS OF GUNFIRE--!

SURELY TAKU AND MY SUBJECTS HAVE NOT--

KEEP MOVIN', THING! DON'T GIVE 'EM AN EASY TARGET.

I NEED YOU TA TELL ME THAT?

PAKKA PAKKA PAKKA

AN' DON'T CALL ME THING!

YA KNOW HOW THAT NAME UPSETS MY DELICATE-- UH OH!

HE'S RIPPING THRU THE INNER GATE.

CONCENTRATE YOUR FIRE!

COXEY'S ARMY!

AND SHOOT TO KILL!!

AT THIS RANGE, THEY JUST MIGHT.

TOO MANY SHELLS STRIKING ANYONE POINT ON BEN'S BODY-- MIGHT WASTE HIM.

THIS CALLS FOR THE OL' FIREFLY SPECIAL, LIKE--

--NOW!

OH, AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT NOT BEIN' ABLE TO SEE, GUYS.

YOU'LL BE GOOD AS NEW-- IN ABOUT AN HOUR!

I DON'T LIKE THIS JAILBREAK BIT, BEN.

BUT, WAITING FOR DUE PROCESS MIGHT BE FATAL TO--

FREE ME-- PLEASE-- FREE ME!

NO-- FREE ME! I'M A POLITICAL PRISONER!

MAYBE YA ARE-- AN' MAYBE YA AIN'T.

WISH I HAD TIME TA FIND OUT.

BUT LIKE THE MAN SAID-- WE'RE IN A HURRY.

LET'S FIND THE PANTHER AN' CLEAR OUTTA HERE, KIDDO. THIS HOOSEGOW BUGS ME.

IT'S STARTED ME THINKIN' AGAIN, AN' I DON'T--

JOHNNY STORM! BEN GRIMM! HOW--?

CAN'T STOP TO EXPLAIN, T'CHALLA.

HOPE IT DOESN'T TOAST YOU, BUT I'M MELTING THESE BARS FAST--WITH MY WHOLE BODY.

TOO MUCH AT STAKE TO DO IT THE SAFE WAY, WITH JUST MY HAND.

THEN-- YOU KNOW EVERY-THING!?

FRANKLY, JUNGLE MAN, I'M STILL PRETTY FUZZY ON A COUPLE'A POINTS--

--BUT THIS AINT THE TIME OR PLACE FOR A POW-WOW.

TWO MORE GUARDS COMIN' THIS WAY-- AND THEY'RE LOADED FOR BEAR.

GET OUT OF SIGHT OVER THERE, T'CHALLA.

BEN AND I WILL--

YOU HAVE DONE ENOUGH, TORCH.

DO NOT SEEK TO DO ALL MY FIGHTING FOR ME.

SOME THINGS, AFTER ALL, ARE BEST LEFT TO--

--THE BLACK LEOPARD!

...THANK YOU, MY FRIENDS, FOR ALLOWING ME THIS *DETOUR*, TO RETRIEVE MY CEREMONIAL ATTIRE.

AT THIS STAGE IN MY LIFE, I FEEL QUITE *NAKED* WITHOUT IT.

NOW ABOUT THE *DEVICE* WE SEEK--

FIRST THINGS *FIRST*, YER HIGHNESS.

HOW COME YOU CALLED YERSELF THE BLACK *LEOPARD* BACK THERE, 'STEAD'A THE *PANTHER*?

I CONTEMPLATE A RETURN TO *YOUR* COUNTRY, BEN GRIMM, WHERE THE LATTER TERM HAS--*POLITICAL* CONNOTATIONS.

HENCE, THE *NEW* NAME --A *MINOR* POINT, AT BEST, SINCE THE PANTHER *IS* A LEOPARD.

I NEITHER CONDEMN *NOR* CONDONE THOSE WHO HAVE TAKEN UP THE NAME-- BUT *T'CHALLA* IS A LAW UNTO *HIMSELF*.

SHEESH! MIGHT AS WELL HAVE OL' LONG-WINDED *REED* HERE WITH US!

COAST'S CLEAR. LET'S *SPLIT!*

...*MADE* IT!

YOU WUZ *SAYIN'*, KINGY?

AS YOU KNOW, THE STOLEN DEVICE VASTLY *INCREASES* THE POWER AND RANGE OF *VIBRANIUM*.

IN ITS NATURAL STATE, THAT RARE METAL *ABSORBS* VIBRATIONS-- STORES THEM LIKE A *BATTERY*-- BUT--

A *CAR* APPROACHES. KEEP *BACK!*

NO SWEAT. TELL US *MORE*.

MY *VIBROTRON* WAS DESIGNED TO *UTILIZE* THAT STORED POWER--

--TO *DISINTEGRATE* ANY METAL AT WHICH IT WAS AIMED!

HEY, HOTHEAD--DIDN'T *DAREDEVIL* TELL US ABOUT SOMETHIN' LIKE THAT, DOWN IN *KA-ZAR'S* BACK YARD?

THE HIDDEN JUNGLE'S *ANTI-METAL* IS BUT AN *ALLOY* OF VIBRANIUM, BEN GRIMM.

EITHER OF THEM, USED IN MY VIBROTRON, COULD MAKE THE NATION WHICH CONTROLS IT *SUPREME* ON THIS PLANET!

SO WHY'D THE LOCALS *JAIL* YOU-- INSTEAD OF HELPING YOU *HUNT*?

TRADITION CAN BE A STRONGER CHAIN THAN EVEN *NECESSITY*, JOHNNY...

"I KNEW THAT--WHICH IS WHY I ENTERED BOTH NATION AND CITY STEALTHILY--AND INCONSPICUOUSLY--

THOSE TWO THIEVES WILL WISH TO DISPOSE OF THE VIBROTRON QUICKLY.

IF ROBARDS HAS IT, HE WOULD BE IN THIS PART OF THE CITY--AND I MUST FIND HIM!

I MUST!!

"BUT, I HAD MADE ONE FATAL ERROR...

"IN MY HASTE, I HAD NEGLECTED TO FORGE AN **IDENTITY CARD**--WHICH **ALL** THE CITY'S BLACKS MUST CARRY WITH THEM AT **ALL TIMES**...

NO **I.D.**, EH?

COME ON, FELLOW. YOU KNOW THAT CARRIES AN AUTOMATIC **30-DAY SENTENCE.**

NO. YOU MUST **NOT** DETAIN ME. I--

WATCH HIM, BOYS. SHOOT TO **WOUND** HIM, IF HE GETS **VIOLENT!**

"HOWEVER, THERE WERE INNOCENT **BYSTANDERS** NEARBY--AND SO, I DID **NOT** TRY TO ESCAPE.

"NOR COULD I LATER CONVINCE THE AUTHORITIES THAT MY HIDDEN **COSTUME** MADE ME ANYTHING MORE...

"...THAN THE MEMBER OF SOME SECRET **TERRORIST SECT...!**

BUT, THERE ARE **SOME** TRIBULATIONS I PREFER TO **FORGET.** AND BESIDES--WE HAVE **ARRIVED.**

ARRIVED.? WHAT'RE YOU--?

AHEAD LIES THE DESERTED **METAL WORKS** YOU MENTIONED...

EUROPEANS

COLOREDS

...THOUGH, EVEN **THERE,** IT SEEMS I CANNOT ESCAPE... **REMINDERS.**

WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE LIVE ON ANOTHER CONTINENT FOR **CENTURIES,** AND STILL CALL THEMSELVES "**EUROPEANS**"?

THEY ARE SHACKLED, TORCH, NEARLY AS MUCH AS **WE.**

WHILE YOU GUYS TALK **SEMANTICS,** OL' BENJY COULD USE A **LEG UP.**

I'VE A **BETTER** IDEA, OLD FRIEND.

COLOREDS

THAT'S MORE **LIKE** IT. NOT THAT I'D HAVE **MINDED** BUSTIN' DOWN THIS DOOR, BUT--

HEY! WHERE'D OL' **HOT-BREATH** FLY OFF TO?

IT'S NEARLY **MIDNIGHT.**

OFFHAND, I SHOULD GUESS HE IS SEARCHING FOR--

JETH ROBARDS, I PRESUME?!

WHATSA-MATTER? CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE?

THEN MAYBE WHAT IT TAKES TO LOOSEN IT IS A BLACK PA--ER, BLACK LEOPARD!

NO--NO! STAY BACK! K-KEEP THOSE FLAMES AWAY FROM ME!!

HMMM...IT SEEMS YOU POSSESS NEITHER RAW COURAGE--

--NOR EVEN THE SKILL TO UTILIZE THE VERY WEAPON YOU STOLE AGAINST US.

YOU DID NOT MASTERMIND THE THEFT OF VIBROTRON, ROBARDS.

NO? THEN WHO DID?

I--I DON'T KNOW. I--

AWFUL FERGITFUL, AINTCHA? MAYBE A BITE'A THIS KNUCKLE SANDWICH WILL--

HOLD, BEN GRIMM!

LIKE HIS FRIEND, HE IS FAR TOO CRAVEN TO WITHHOLD ANY-THING FROM US.

I THINK HE TRULY DOES NOT KNOW.

WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE ALL GONNA FIND OUT WHO'S BEHIND THIS--AND SOON.

HEADS UP!

A HELICOPTER --DESCENDING FROM THE NIGHT SKY!

YET--IT MOVES WITHOUT SOUND.

OF COURSE! I SHOULD HAVE SENSED IT BEFORE.

ONLY ONE MAN IS THE TOTAL MASTER OF SOUND--HAS PREVIOUS KNOW-LEDGE OF WAKANDA LAND--

--AND LOATHES ME ENOUGH TO RISK HIS ALL FOR VENGEANCE AGAINST ME!

THE MAN CALLED-- KLAW!*

A PITY YOU DID NOT SEE MY HAND IN THIS AFFAIR EARLIER, DEAR T'CHALLA.

SUCH FORESIGHT MIGHT HAVE MINUTELY ENHANCED YOUR PROSPECTS FOR SURVIVAL.

*FIRST MUTATED THUS IN #56. --STAN.

AS IT IS, THEY ARE QUITE--

ZZZZZ

--NEGLIGIBLE!

BEN! T'CHALLA! LOOK OUT!

SKRATCH

STAY BACK, BOTH OF YOU! THIS IS MY FIGHT.

LIKE FISH! THAT WUZN'T NO GREETIN'-CARD HE JUST SENT US.

I'LL STOP HIM, AS SOON AS I--

FLAME ON!

AN IMPRESSIVE BATTLE-CRY, YOUTH...

YET, IT IS NOT SLOGANS WHICH WIN THE DAY--

ZASSK! OHHH

--BUT THE COOLEST HEAD-- THE SUREST AIM!

THE TORCH IS FALLIN'!

GOTCHA, KID. I--

HE'S OUT COLD.

HEY! WHERE'S THE THIEF OF BAGDAD GOIN'?

GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE! GOT TO--

SO--YOU'D SEEK TO ABANDON THE FRAY IN MY OWN CRAFT, WOULD YOU?

THEN, EXIT *CRAFT*-- AND EXIT *ROBARDS!*

ZAK!

YER A REAL *MEAN* CUSS, AINTCHA?

WELL, HOW DO YA *WANT* IT? STANDIN' *UP*, OR RUNNIN' *AWAY?*

I PREFER *NOT* TO RECEIVE AT *ALL*, GARGOYLE.

IT IS MUCH MORE MY NATURE--TO *GIVE!*

SZZIST!

AMAZING! I HURL A VERY *MOUNTAIN* OF ROCK AND CONCRETE AT YOU--

--AND STILL YOU *PLOW FORWARD*, LIKE SOME MAMMOTH *SALMON.*

BUT, IT MATTERS *NOT.*

I SHALL *CONTINUE* THIS DEADLY HAIL--

--WITH CONCRETE, MORTAR, AND *SONIC BLASTS* ALL AT ONCE--

ZZZZZ

--TILL YOU ARE SURROUNDED, *ENGULFED*, BY CRAGGY, BONE-CRUSHING DEBRIS!

UNNH!

HE IS *FINISHED* AT LAST!

WHERE *NOW* YOUR FALSE BRAVADO, MONSTER?

BURIED *WITH* YOU, NO DOUBT, BENEATH *TONS* OF SHATTERED STONE.

IF BEN GRIMM *IS* DEAD, KLAW-- YOU'LL *PAY*--

--AS *NO MAN* HAS EVER PAID *BEFORE!*

MMFFF!

BUT--KLAW IS *NO LONGER* A MAN, FOOL.

KLAW IS *SOUND INCARNATE*--A FORM OF PURE *SONIC LIFE*--

--OR HAD EVEN *YOU* FORGOTTEN THAT?

PZZAP!

YOU, T'CHALLA! YOU CAUSED ME TO LOSE THIS ARM, SO MANY YEARS AGO.

I'VE WAITED LONG FOR THIS PRICELESS MOMENT--

AND, NOW THAT IT'S COME, I--

WHO'S THAT-- BEHIND ME--?

KRRUNCH!

WELL, I COULD BE A PIP-SQUEAK CALLED THE MOLE MAN...

OR, I COULD BE A LITTLE CAESAR NAMED TYRANNUS...

AN' THEN AGAIN, I COULD JUST BE...

...THE EVER-LOVIN', BLUE-EYED, BLASTER-BUSTIN' THING!

MY SONI-CLAW YOU'VE-- DEMOLISHED IT.!

BUT-- IT WAS NO MERE WEAPON-- NO INSTRUMENT OF LIFELESS STEEL.

IT WAS PART OF ME --OF MY OWN, SONICALLY-ALTERED BODY!

AND SOME HAVE VOWED THAT IT IS THE ONLY PART OF YOU WHICH HAS ANY MERIT.

WELL? DO YOU FEAR TO STAND AGAINST EVEN A WOUNDED T'CHALLA, BEREFT OF YOUR WEAPON?

I FEAR NOTHING, SWINE...

FOR, ITS JAGGED EDGES CAN STILL--

MISSED!

AS YOU YOURSELF HAVE SAID, KLAW...

IT IS THE COOLEST HEAD...

...THE SUREST AIM THAT WINS THE DAY!

JUST THEN: EVEN A USELESS EDIFICE, IT SEEMS...

HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!

...MAY HAVE ITS CONTINGENT OF ARMED WATCHMEN!

BUT, A FEW SCARCE-NEEDED INTRODUCTIONS...A WORD OR TWO OF EXPLANATION, AND...

...WELL, MR. GRIMM, IT LOOKS AS IF THE WORLD OWES YOU AND MR. STORM A VOTE OF THANKS.

WHAT ABOUT-- T'CHALLA?

I WANT NO THANKS, JOHNNY. I'M MERELY GLAD THE VIBROTRON WAS DESTROYED WHEN ROBARDS DIED.

UH...ACTUALLY, FELLOW...YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE IN THIS PART OF TOWN... AFTER DARK, YOU KNOW.

I MEAN...I'M NOT GOING TO ASK YOU FOR AN I.D. OR ANYTHING, BUT...

LET'S GO, T'CHALLA ...KID...

BEAUTIFUL! YA BREAK YER BACK SAVIN' THE WHOLE GOL-DANG WORLD...

EUROPEANS

COLOREDS

...THEN YOU GOTTA WALK OUT... THRU SEPARATE-BUT-EQUAL DOORS!

KINDA MAKES YOU WONDER IF IT WAS WORTH IT, HUH?

LOOK, JUNIOR...I KNOW WE'RE ALREADY IN DUTCH AROUND HERE FOR THAT JAILBREAK SCENE...BUT...

I DIG, BEN.

GO ON... BEFORE I BEAT YOU TO IT.

EUROPEANS

I BEEN WANTIN' TA DO THIS...

SKRUTCH!

...EVER SINCE WE SET FOOT OFF THE PLANE...

RUMMBLE

AN' THERE'S SOME THINGS...

SKRRAAK

--YOU JUST GOTTA GET OUT OF YER SYSTEM!

FLOOM

THERE! Y'KNOW, SOMEHOW I FEEL A LITTLE BIT BETTER ABOUT EVERYTHIN' NOW. NOT MUCH, THOUGH.

BEN GRIMM... I DON'T...KNOW HOW TO...

FERGIT IT, T'CHALLA. I DIDN'T DO THAT FOR YOU...

I DID IT... FOR ME.

NOW C'MON, YOU TWO...

...LET'S GET OUTTA HERE.

COLDREDS

EANS

AND, IN THE EARLY GLOOM OF MORNING, TWO MEN STARE AFTER THEM... MOUTHS SLACK AND MINDS A-GAPE...

...AND PERHAPS THEY UNDERSTAND... JUST A LITTLE....!

COLDREDS

EUROPEANS

NEXT: GABRIEL BLOW YOUR HORN!

FANTASTIC FOUR

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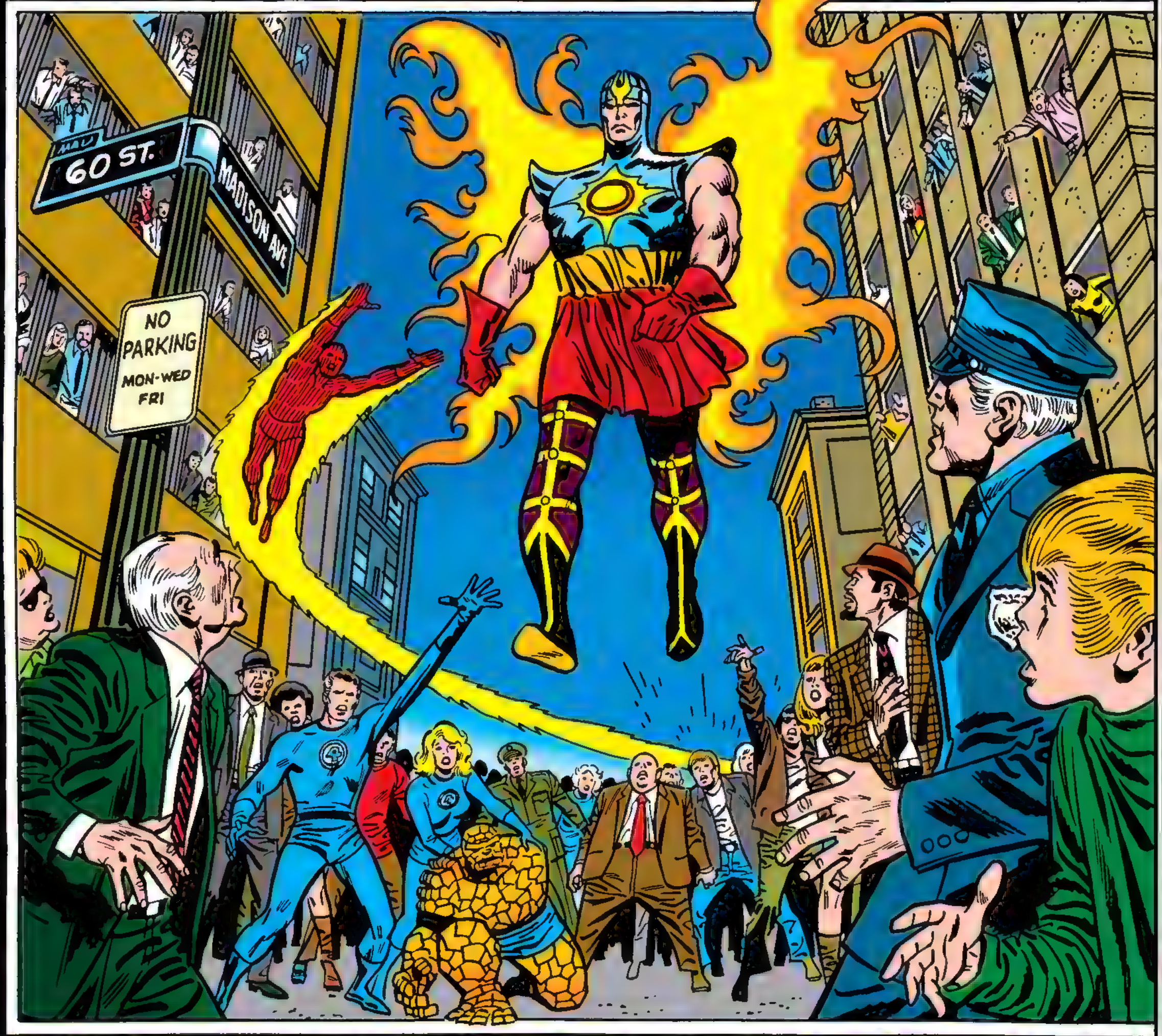

FROM THE DARKEST REACHES OF NOWHERE HE COMES---

THE AIR-WALKER!

NOT EVEN THE FABULOUS F.F. CAN SAVE THE WORLD FROM--

THE HORROR THAT WALKS ON AIR!

IT WORKS, REED! YOUR NEW PLASTIC IS COMPLETELY FIREPROOF!

GOOD DEAL! THAT MEANS WE CAN--

HOLD IT, TORCH! THAT'S THE CONDITION RED ALARM

EEEEEEE

NUTS!

PIN-UP PARADE

IT HAPPENS EVERY TIME A GUY SITS DOWN WIT' A BOOK, TA BROADEN HIS MIND!

A CATACLYSMIC CO-PRODUCTION OF
SUPER-STAN LEE *and* **BIG JOHN BUSCEMA**

EMBELLISHMENT BY: JOHN SINNOTT

LETTERING BY: ARTIE SIMEK

8272

EEEEEEEEEEEEEE

COME ON! MOVE IT!

THAT ALARM MEANS DANGER!

WE'RE RIGHT WITH YOU, MISTER!

REED! WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S WRONG?

IS THAT THE CONDITION RED I HEAR?

YOU KNOW IT, SUE!

IT MEANS THE BAXTER BUILDING'S UNDER ATTACK!

BUT--WHO WOULD DARE--WITH THE FANTASTIC FOUR UP HERE?

LOOK! OUT THE WINDOW! THAT MUST BE THE ANSWER!

STAY BACK! FIRST ONE TO MAKE A MOVE GETS IT!

SO THE F.F. HAS A PRIVATE ELEVATOR, HUH?

A FAT LOTTA GOOD THAT'S GONNA DO 'EM!

LET'S GO! IT'LL ALL BE OVER BEFORE THEY KNOW WHAT HIT 'EM!

CLICK

PH-

29

28

26

HEY! THEY BLASTED THEIR WAY INTA THE ELEVATOR!

BRACE YOURSELVES! HERE THEY COME!

I *TOLD* YA THE F.F. WASN'T AS *GREAT* AS THEY'RE CRACKED UP TO BE!

LET 'EM *HAVE* IT!

WITH *THEM* OUTTA ACTION, ALL OF RICHARDS' *FORMULAS* WILL BELONG TO *US!*

WE'LL SELL HIS INVENTIONS FOR *MILLIONS* ON THE OPEN MARKET!

HAH! WE CAUGHT 'EM *FLAT-FOOTED--* JUST LIKE WE *FIGGERED!*

THEY MEAN *BUSINESS!* THEY'RE OUT FOR *BLOOD!*

THEN LET'S GIVE THEM *MORE* THAN THEY BARGAINED FOR!

IS *THAT* THE FASTEST YOU CAN *FIRE* THAT CHOPPER?

STRETCH ALL YA *WANT* TO-- IT AINT GONNA *SAVE* YA!

WE'RE NOT THE ONES WHO ARE IN NEED OF SAVING!

AND, IN CASE YOU NEED *PROOF--*

I'LL USE MY *INVISIBLE POWER* TO MAKE HIS *ARMS* FADE FROM SIGHT!

MY *ARMS!* WHAT *HAPPENED* TO 'EM?

THE *GUN!* IT--IT'S FLOATIN' IN *AIR!*

MEANWHILE--

I AINT GONNA LET *SUSIE* HAVE ALL THE FUN!

THERE'S *ONE* THING WHAT ALWAYS *BUGS* ME--

BKOW!

--AND THAT'S A GUY WHAT AINT *NEIGHBORLY!*

FORGET THE OTHERS! POLISH OFF *REED RICHARDS!*

HE'S THEIR *LEADER!*

YOU'RE *RIGHT,* BIG-MOUTH! AND WE AIM TO *KEEP* HIM AROUND!

--'CAUSE THIS WEEK IT'S *HIS* TURN TO TAKE OUT THE *GARBAGE!*

OWW! HE--HE MADE THE FLOOR *RED HOT!*

CAN'T *STAND* ON IT! IT'S *BURNIN'* MY FEET!

TORCH! DOUSE THAT FLAME OF YOURS-- OR *ELSE!*

I SAID **DOUSE** IT, MAN!

GIVE UP-- ALL OF YA--

--OR I TOSS THIS **GRENADE** ON THE CROWD DOWN BELOW!

WE BEEN PLANNIN' THIS CAPER FER **WEEKS**--AND WE AINT LETTIN' **NOTHIN'** STOP US **NOW**!

IF I CAN JUST STRETCH **AROUND** BEFORE HE **NOTICES** ME--

MADE IT!

OH **NO!** HE-- HE **DROPPED** THE GRENADE!

HEY! WHAT THE--?!!

HELP! I'M **FALLING!**

HOLD ME! **PLEASE** HOLD ME! D-DON'T LET ME **GO!**

HOLD ME! YOU--YOU GOTTA **HOLD** ME!

SHUT UP! IF I MISS THAT **GRENADE**, I'LL--

AH! JUST IN **TIME!**

ANOTHER **SECOND**-- WOULD HAVE BEEN **TOO LATE!**

WELL! YOU DIDN'T LEAVE MUCH ELSE FOR ME TO DO.

WADDAYA EXPECT? WE HADDA KEEP BUSY WHILE YA WUZ PLAYIN' OUT THERE.

HEY! SOMEONE'S SCREAMIN'!

IT'S COMIN' FROM THE ELEVATOR-- OUT IN THE HALL!

LISTEN! THE SCREAMS ARE GETTING FAINTER--FURTHER AWAY!

THE ELEVATOR'S FALLING! IT'S OUT OF CONTROL!

BEN! GET OUT THERE! TEAR THE DOORS OPEN!

THE CABLE IS SHREDDED! A STRAY BULLET MUST HAVE SNAPPED IT!

DOES THAT MEAN-- WE'RE TOO LATE?

NO! THERE'S STILL A CHANCE!

GRAB THE CABLE! HOLD ON FOR DEAR LIFE!

I HEAR YA TALKIN'!

WE DID IT, BIG FELLA!

WE GOT THEM OUT SAFELY!

IT'S ABOUT TIME!

THIS BLASTED FLOOR'S CHILLY!

YOU ORANGE-SKINNED FREAK--I HOPE YOU'RE SATISFIED!

DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH DAMAGE YOU'VE DONE TO MY BUILDING?

THOK!

HEY! WHO IN BLUE BLAZES--?

WELL, WELL! IF IT AINT OL' BLOOD-N-GUTS COLLINS, OUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD LANDLORD!

I'LL BLOOD-N-GUTS YOU, BUSTER!

YOU FINALLY GAVE ME AN EXCUSE TO EVICT THE WHOLE BUNCH OF YOU COSTUMED CRETINS!

YOU CAN'T KICK *US* OUTTA HERE! WHAT'D WE *DO*.? WHAT'D WE *DO*.?

WHAT *DIDN'T* YOU DO.? JUST *LOOK* AT THIS PLACE! A BROKEN *ELEVATOR*! HALF THE 35TH FLOOR *WRECKED*!

BEAT-UP *CROOKS* ALL *OVER* THE PLACE!

YEAH! YEAH! BUT WHAT'D WE *DO*.??

OUT! *OUT*! AND I MEAN RIGHT *NOW*!

NOW *HOLD* IT, COLLINS! NONE OF THIS WAS *OUR* FAULT!

DON'T TELL *ME* YOUR TROUBLES! JUST START *PACKING*!

WE CAN'T *HELP* IT IF WE WERE *ATTACKED*!

OKAY, BLISTER BRAIN--THAT *SINKS* IT! *NOBODY* BLOWS SMOKE IN THE *THING'S* BABY BLUES!

HE'S A *MADMAN*! A *SAVAGE*!

BEN! *DON'T*! *COOL* IT, OL' BUDDY!

COLLINS! FOR PETE'S SAKE--GET *OUT* OF HERE!

I'LL *GET*! I'LL *GET*! JUST KEEP THAT MANIAC *AWAY* FROM ME!

LEMME *AT* 'IM! JUST LEMME GIT MY *PAWS* ON THAT PRUNE-FACED, PIE-EYED REFUGEE FROM *YANCY STREET*!

YOU'RE *CRAZY*-- *ALL* OF YOU! THIS PLACE IS A *MADHOUSE*!

POOR COLLINS! I GUESS WE REALLY *AREN'T* THE BEST TENANTS HE COULD WISH FOR.

NUTS! WHAT'S *HE* GOT TO COMPLAIN ABOUT.? I DON'T SEE *HIM* WEARIN' NO MEDALS FOR BEIN' *LANDLORD OF THE YEAR*!

AS A MATTER OF FACT, BEN, I--

WHAT'S THAT?

A SUDDEN, BLINDING FLASH OF *LIGHT*!

IT CAN ONLY MEAN--

IT'S *AGATHA HARKNESS*-- CONTACTING US BY THE POWER OF *WITCHCRAFT!*

BUT, SHE'S BEEN HOME --IN THE *MOUNTAINS*-- TAKING CARE OF LITTLE *FRANKLIN*

IF THIS MEANS-- THAT SOMETHING IS *WRONG*-- WRONG WITH MY *BABY*--!!

DO NOT *WORRY* ABOUT YOUR SON! HE IS ALL RIGHT.

BUT THERE *IS* DANGER! A DANGER FAR *GREATER* THAN YOU SUSPECT!

A DANGER TO ALL OF *MANKIND!*

--TO THE PLANET *EARTH* ITSELF!

WHAT *IS* IT, MISS HARKNESS?

TELL US! YOU *MUST* TELL US!

I DO NOT *KNOW!* IT IS SOMETHING SO *STRANGE*--SO TOTALLY *ALIEN*--THAT MY SPELLS CANNOT *SHOW* IT!

BUT ALL THE MYSTIC SIGNS *AGREE*--IT HAS REACHED OUR WORLD AT THIS VERY *INSTANT!*

I HAVE GIVEN THE *WARNING!* I CAN DO *NO MORE!*

THE REST IS UP TO *YOU!*

SHE'S--*FADING* AWAY!

REED! WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT?

WAIT! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

INTO THE LAB-- FAST!

WE'LL USE THE TRANS-GLOBAL SCANNER, TO SEE IF ANYTHING UNUSUAL HAS BEEN REPORTED ANYWHERE ON EARTH!

AND, EVEN AS THE SCANNER STARTS ITS ELECTRONIC PROBING--

HOLY HANNAH! WHA-- WHAT'S THAT?!!

LOOK! IN THE SKY-- ABOVE US! HOW CAN IT BE?

IT IS NOT POSSIBLE! VE MUST BE DREAMING!

NEIN, MEIN HERR! IT IS A NIGHTMARE!

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! I CAN'T!

BLIMEY! WE'RE GOING MAD!

WHAT'S WRONG? WHAT DID YOU SEE?

UP THERE! LOOK! LOOK UP THERE!

MAMA MIA! IT IS A MIRACLE!

TELL US, COMRADE--WHAT CAN IT BE?

AN EVIL, CAPITALISTIC TRICK!

BEHOLD! IN THE SKY! IT IS MOST PASSING STRANGE!

WHY DID CHAIRMAN MAO NOT WARN US OF SUCH A THING?

WHAT KIND OF SAFARI IS THIS?

I NEVER SAW ANYTHING LIKE THAT IN AFRICA BEFORE!

NO MAN EVER DID!

OVER THE VAST, SPRAWLING CONTINENTS--ACROSS THE ENDLESS, ROARING SEAS--ABOVE THE DESERTS--THE JUNGLES--THE TEEMING CITIES OF EARTH HE COMES--THIS STRANGELY SILENT BEING--THIS PROUD AND POWERFUL FIGURE--THIS MAN WHO WALKS ON AIR--

HE PEERS AT OUR WORLD THROUGH EYES WITHOUT EMOTION, WITHOUT EXPRESSION--EYES WITHOUT **MERCY!**

HE HOVERS ABOVE THE SMALLEST **HAMLET**--THE LARGEST **METROPOLIS**--AND **NOTHING** ESCAPES HIS NOTICE!

DISTANCE ITSELF IS WITHOUT **MEANING** TO HIM--FOR HE CAN **ZOOM** THROUGH THE SKY **FASTER** THAN THE EYE CAN FOLLOW!

BUT, ABOVE THE ROCKY COAST OF **MAINE**, HIS SPEED **SLACKENS** ONCE AGAIN, AND IT IS **THERE** THAT REED'S **SCANNER** FINALLY ZEROES IN--

WHAT MAKES YA THINK ***HE'S*** THE GUY WE'RE AFTER, STRETCHO?

A MAN WHO WALKS ON ***AIR?***

HE'LL ***DO*** TILL SOMETHING ***BETTER*** COMES ALONG!

MRS. HARKNESS SAID THE MENACE HAS ***JUST*** REACHED EARTH!

THE TIMING'S TOO ***CLOSE*** FOR COINCIDENCE!

HE ***MUST*** BE THE ONE!

I STILL DON'T GIT IT! WHAT'S THE DANGER?

HE AINT HURTIN' NOTHIN' UP THERE.

MRS. HARKNESS DOESN'T CRY WOLF, BEN!

WE DARE NOT IGNORE HER WARNING!

THEN, AFTER A NORTHERN JOURNEY AT THE FANTASTI-CAR'S TOP SPEED--

WE'RE NEARING OUR GOAL, DEAR! THE GYRO-TRACK IS STARTING TO QUIVER

HEADS UP BACK THERE! THIS IS IT!

LOOK! THE REPORTS WERE TRUE! THERE HE IS!

JOHNNY! FOLLOW PLAN "T FOR TAUNT"

FLAME ON!

DON'T HARM HIM! JUST MAKE HIM FOLLOW US!

WE'VE GOT TO LURE HIM TO THE LAB!

HEY! HE WON'T EVEN TURN AROUND!

BUT HE CAN'T IGNORE AN EXPLODING FIREBALL!

IT WORKED! HE SEES US!

NOW WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

BACK TO THE *SHIP!* I'LL DO THE REST!

WE'VE GOT TO COUNT ON HIS *CURIOSITY*--IF HE *HAS* ANY!

HE--HE'S *FOLLOWING*--WITHOUT EVEN MOVING HIS *LEGS!*

BIG DEAL! I AIN'T MOVING *MY* LEGS!

BUT YOU'RE IN A *SHIP!*

FASTER, REED! SEE IF HE CAN KEEP *UP* WITH US!

HE DID IT *EASY!*

I *THOUGHT* HE WOULD.

DON'T *LOSE* HIM WHILE I LAND!

COME *OFF* IT, PAL!

HOW CAN YA *LOSE* A CREEP WHO WALKS ON *AIR?*

A GUY LIKE *THAT* IS APT TA GIT *NOTICED!*

WATCH HIM TILL I GET BACK.

IF YA ASK *ME,* HE'S STARTIN' TA GIT *BORED.*

I'LL MAKE SURE THAT HE DOESN'T TRY TO *LEAVE.*

YOU, SIS? *HOW?*

WOULD *YOU* LEAVE IF SOMEONE'S BODY *VANISHED* RIGHT BEFORE YOUR EYES?

SHEEESH! YA BET YER *BIPPIE* I WOULD!

EVEN THOUGH WE *KNOW* IT'S SUE'S *INVISIBLE FORCE FIELD*--

THE EFFECT IS *STILL* HARD TO TAKE!

EVEN *THAT* DOESN'T SEEM TO *IMPRESS* HIM!

THIS TIME I'LL TRY SOMETHING *DIFFERENT.*

HEY! WHAT'S GOIN' *ON?*

RELAX, BEN! I'M JUST *LIFTING* YOU --WITH MY *FORCE FIELD!*

IT'S *NO GOOD,* SIS! NO ONE WHO WALKS ON AIR *HIMSELF* WOULD BE IMPRESSED WITH *THAT!*

HE'S-- STARTING TO *TURN!*

WE MUSTN'T *LOSE* HIM!

HEY, MISTER-- *HOLD IT!*

FLAME ON!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT *REED* IS DOING--

BUT I'VE GOTTA *KEEP* THIS JOKER HERE TILL HE GETS *BACK!*

EVERYONE LIKES TO WATCH SOME *FIREWORKS.*

MAYBE *THIS'LL* HOLD HIS INTEREST FOR A WHILE.

MINUTES LATER--

I--CAN'T COME UP WITH ANY-THING *MORE!* MY FLAME'S GETTING WEAK.

HAVE TO *REST--* FOR A WHILE.

AND THROUGH IT ALL, THE STRANGE, IMPASSIVE FIGURE STANDS SILENT-- STANDS UNMOVED

HE'S LOOKIN' AT US LIKE WE'RE A BUNCH'A BUGS, CRAWLIN' UNDER HIS CLODHOPPERS!

WELL, WE AINT NO BUGS! NO MATTER WHAT POWER HE'S GOT, WE AINT NO PANTYWAISTS NEITHER!

AN' I'M GONNA PROVE IT-- RIGHT NOW!

EASY NOW, BEN.

IT'LL BE EASY, AWRIGHT!

ALL I GOTTA DO IS GRAB ME A HUNK'A THE FANTASTI-CAR--

HEY, BIG BUDDY-- WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

'SMATTER? YA NEVER SAW NOBODY LIFT UP A FEW TONS BEFORE?

NOW STAY OUTTA THE WAY, HOT SHOT! I'M GONNA NEED PLENTY'A ROOM!

WHZZZZSSHH

OKAY--LET'S SEE THAT CLOWN UP THERE TRY SOMETHIN' LIKE THIS!

MEANWHILE, AS YOU MIGHT EXPECT, THE FAR-OUT ROOFTOP TABLEAU HAS ATTRACTED MORE THAN A LITTLE INTEREST ON THE PART OF THE CITY'S CITIZENRY--

LOOK! THE AIR-WALKER'S ON THE ROOF UP THERE!

THE TORCH JUST LANDED!

HEY! WHAT'S WITH THE THING?

YEAH-- HE'S WITH THE FF!

WHAT ARE THEY DOING UP THERE?

AND, IT ISN'T LONG BEFORE THE UBIQUITOUS NEWS MEDIA STEPS IN--

THEY SHOULD'A HELD IT OFF A WHILE.

YEAH, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER ON THE 11 O'CLOCK NEWS!

THEN, FINALLY--AN EXPERIMENTAL AIR FORCE DRONE PLANE MAKES THE SCENE--

THE PENTAGON MUST WANT A CLOSER LOOK!

HISSZSKK

HE DESTROYED IT WITH JUST A GESTURE!

QUICK! PUT ME THRU TO GENERAL ROSS!

WHAT? CALL OFF OUR FORCES? YOU MUST BE MAD, RICHARDS!

I'LL SHOW THAT FREE-FLOATING FREAK HE CAN'T MESS AROUND WITH UNCLE SAM!

OUR SPECIAL TANK FORCE SHOULD BE REACHING THE AREA RIGHT NOW!

THEY'LL BRING HIM DOWN--OR KNOW THE REASON WHY!

PREPARE TO LAUNCH ROCKETS!

HE--HE'S JUST *STANDING* THERE, AS THOUGH--

I *KNEW* IT! HE WASN'T *AFRAID!* HE HAD NO *REASON* TO BE!

THERE SEEMS TO BE NO *LIMIT* TO HIS UNCANNY *POWER!*

HE *DEFLECTED* THE MISSILES-- EXPLODED THEM *HARMLESSLY* INTO THE RIVER!

HE'S HEADIN' *BACK* TO US!

GIT SET FOR THE *PAYOFF!*

NO, BEN-- *NO!* DON'T *TOUCH* HIM!

IT'S TOO *SOON!* WE HAVE TO *WAIT*-- TO LEARN MORE *ABOUT* HIM!

WATCH! HE'S TRYING TO *SHOW* US SOMETHING!

HE'S GRABBIN' THE *FANTASTI-CAR!*

HE'S LIFTING IT *EFFORTLESSLY*-- WITH *ONE* HAND!

THE CREEP'S TRYIN' TA SHOW HE'S AS STRONG AS *ME!*

AND HE *IS!*

HE'S *PROVED* HIS POINT! HE'S *LEAVING!*

HE'S HEADING FOR THE *CROWD*-- DOWN BELOW!

MEBBE *THAT'S* HIS BAG--SELLIN' *AUTOGRAPHS!*

LOOK *OUT!* HE'S COMING THIS *WAY!*

LOOK AT HIS *FACE!* HE'S OUT TO *GET* US!

WHAT'RE WE *SCARED* OF? HE'S ONLY *ONE* GUY!

IF WE *RUSH* 'IM WE CAN *TAKE* 'IM!

HEY *WAIT!* *WATCH* IT! WHAT'S HE *DOIN'?*

SOMETHING'S PUSHING US *BACK!*

IT'S--LIKE A *TORNADO!* CAN'T *RESIST* IT!

LOOK! NOW HE'S POINTING AT--THE *TANKS!*

HEY! WHAT'S *HAPPENING?*

QUICK! OUT OF THE *TANKS!* --WHILE YOU *CAN!*

HOW? *HOW?* ALL HE DID WAS *WAVE* AT THEM, AND--

THEY *MELTED!* --LIKE THEY WERE MADE OF *BUTTER!*

I DUNNO WHO-- OR *WHAT* HE IS --BUT IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN *WEAPONS* TO BEAT 'IM!

BE SILENT, ALL!

WOW! HOW ABOUT THAT! HE--HE CAN TALK! AND--IN OUR LANGUAGE!

I HAVE COME TO THIS SICK AND SAVAGE PLANET TO MAKE AN ANNOUNCEMENT--

YOU MUST PREPARE FOR THE FINAL JUDGEMENT--

ALL OF MANKIND IS DOOMED!

THAT CINCHES IT! HE IS THE ONE AGATHA WARNED US ABOUT!

WE'RE THRU WAITING!

NOW YER TALKIN', MISTER!

I'LL TACKLE HIM FIRST! FLAME ON!

THIS TIME I'M NOT PULLIN' ANY PUNCHES! I'M GONNA--

NO! HE'S DOUSING MY FLAME! I--I'M FALLING!

JOHNNY!

I--CAUGHT HIM--JUST IN TIME!

YOU ARE SWIFT, EARTHLING--WITH POWER MOST FORMIDABLE!

BUT NEITHER YOUR SPEED NOR YOUR POWER CAN PREVAIL AGAINST ME!

UNHHH!

FOR I AM NOT TO BE DEFIED!

HE *WHUMPED* THE TORCH AN' STRETCHO!

THAT MEANS IT'S *CLOBBERIN' TIME!*

BE *CAREFUL*, BEN.! ANY-ONE WHO COULD FELL *REED* SO EASILY--

AW *BULL!* IT WUZ JUST A *LUCKY* PUNCH!

BUT *I'M* GONNA LAY A *YANCY STREET SPECIAL* ON 'IM--

PUKOW!

NOBODY *HUMAN* COULD HAVE *DONE* THIS TO THEM!

WHO *ARE* YOU? WHERE ARE YOU *FROM?* AND WHY--*WHY* HAVE YOU COME HERE?

YES! IT IS *TIME* FOR MEN TO LEARN THE ANSWER!

I COME FROM-- *ABOVE*

AS FOR MY *NAME*--AND MY *MISSION*--

PERHAPS THIS GOLDEN *OBJECT* WILL FURNISH A *CLUE*--

SEE HOW IT *GLOWS!* SEE HOW IT *GROWS*-- BEFORE YOUR VERY *EYES!*

IT IS THE TRUMPET OF GABRIEL-- FOR SUCH IS MY NAME!

I HAVE COME HERE TO BLOW IT--TO LET MANKIND KNOW--

THE END OF THE WORLD IS AT HAND!

CONTINUED!

(IF WE MANAGE TO SURVIVE!)

FANTASTIC FOUR
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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

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FANTASTIC FOUR™

TM

FEATURING: THE SILVER SURFER!

IT'S MONSTROUS! IT'S MYSTERIOUS! IT'S MIND-BLOWING!

THE SECRET OF GABRIEL!

YOUR SENSES WILL REEL IN SHOCK AS THE FABULOUS F.F. FINALLY UNCOVER···

THE MYSTERIOUS MIND-BLOWING SECRET OF GABRIEL!

IT *STARTED* LAST ISSUE, AND THE HUMAN RACE WILL NEVER *FORGET* IT! FROM OUT OF *NOWHERE* HE CAME---THIS MYSTERIOUS BEING WHO *WALKS ON AIR!* POSSESSING DEADLY *POWER* ENOUGH TO CRUSH THE *FANTASTIC FOUR* THEMSELVES, HE FINALLY ANNOUNCED THAT HIS NAME IS *GABRIEL*--AND HE HAS COME TO HERALD *THE END OF LIFE ON EARTH!* NOW CONTINUE--IF YOU *DARE!*

IN MY HAND--- THE TRUMPET OF *GABRIEL*--- FOR SUCH IS MY *NAME!*

SOON I SHALL *BLOW* IT-- AND, WHEN I *DO*---

THE END OF THE WORLD WILL BE NIGH!

ANOTHER MASTERPIECE OF FAR-OUT **FANTASY** BY---

STAN (THE MAN) LEE and **BIG JOHN BUSCEMA**

JOE SINNOTT *EMBELLISHER*

SAM ROSEN *LETTERER*

8542

HEY, STRETCHO-- HE SOUNDS LIKE HE MEANS IT!

AIN'T NO WAY WE CAN SAVE OUR-SELVES FROM-- AN ANGEL!

QUIET, BEN! WE DARE NOT MISS A WORD!

THERE'S MORE TO THIS THAN WE KNOW! THERE MUST BE!

HOW? HOW CAN HE STAND ON AIR LIKE THAT?

ONLY I SHALL PICK THE TIME --AND THE PLACE!

RETURN TO YOUR HOMES-- AND WAIT!

AN ANGEL CAN DO ANYTHING!

NO! YOU CAN-NOT TREAT US AS THOUGH WE'VE NO MINDS--NO WILL OF OUR OWN!

NO MATTER WHAT YOUR POWER-- YOU'RE DEALING WITH MEN!

MEN? WHAT ARE MEN TO ME?

WHEN WALKING THRU A FIELD, DO YOU CONSIDER THE ANT BENEATH YOUR FEET?

I AM GABRIEL! TO ME, YOU ARE FAR LESS THAN ANTS!

ALL HE DID WUZ WAVE-- AN' HE STARTED A WHOLE BLASTED STORM!

YOU MUST NOT CHALLENGE-- YOU MUST NOT QUESTION MY WILL!

ALL THE FORCES OF NATURE ARE ***MINE*** TO COMMAND!

OKAY! ***OKAY!*** YA ***MADE*** YER POINT!

YOU SOME KINDA ***FANATIC*** OR SOMETHIN'?

GABRIEL--STOP!

IF WE'RE NO MORE THAN ***ANTS*** TO YOU---

THEN WHAT ARE YOU ***PROVING?***

SINCE WHEN MUST AN ***ANGEL*** IMPRESS A MERE ***ANT?***

I HAVE NO ***NEED*** TO IMPRESS ***ANY*** LIVING BEING! I AM ***GABRIEL!***

LET THE STORM CEASE!

IT ***WORKED,*** STRETCHO! YA CONNED 'IM INTO KNOCKIN' OFF THE ***WIND!***

BUT--WHAT DO WE DO ***NEXT?***

WHAT ***CHANCE*** HAVE WE AGAINST POWER LIKE ***HIS?***

I NEVER HEARD ***REED*** SOUND SO ***DEFEATED!***

FERGET IT, KID! HE'S JUST ***BUSHED*** FROM THAT WORKOUT!

BUT ***ME***--I'M READY TA ***CLOBBER*** THAT CLOWN!

NO--***NO!*** STAY ***BACK!***

DON'T ***ANGER*** GABRIEL!

PERHAPS--IF WE *APPEASE* HIM--IF WE ACT *FRIENDLY* TO HIM--HE'LL BE *MERCIFUL*--HE'LL *SPARE* US!

WE HAVE TO *TRY* IT! WE'VE GOT TO DO *ANY-THING*--TO *SAVE* OUR-SELVES!

WE'LL *DO* SOMETHIN', ALL RIGHT! JUST LEMME TEAR *INTO* 'IM!

YOU *FOOL!* YOU UGLY *MONSTRO-SITY!* YOU'LL GET US ALL *KILLED!*

I GOT *NEWS* FOR YA, LOUD-MOUTH! WHEN *I'M* DONE WITH YA, YOU WON'T HAVETA *WORRY* ABOUT GABRIEL!

BEN! STOP! *DON'T!* LET HIM *GO!*

BUT *SOMEBODY'S* GOTTA GIVE 'EM SOME *BACKBONE!*

THEY'RE ALL READY TA LAY DOWN 'N PLAY *DEAD* SOON AS *GABRIEL* SNAPS HIS BLASTED *FINGERS!*

NO! WE'RE IN THE *GRIP* OF SOMETHING FAR TOO *BIG* TO SETTLE BY BLIND *BRUTE FORCE!*

FORCE? THERE *IS* NO FORCE--EXCEPT *MINE!*

HAVE I NOT *TOLD* YOU? --*SHOWN* YOU? *MINE* IS THE POWER! MINE *ALONE!*

BUT YOU *STILL* HAVE A CHANCE--*ONE* CHANCE TO WIN MY *FAVOR!*

TELL US! *TELL* US! *ANY-THING!*

WE'LL DO *ANYTHING!*

THEN--DESTROY THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

REED! WHAT--?

JOHNNY-- QUICK! *FLAME ON!*

GABRIEL MUST BE *OBEYED!*

GABRIEL HAS *SPOKEN!* LET'S *GO!*

DON'T **HURT** THEM, JOHNNY! JUST USE YOUR **FLAME** TO HOLD THEM **BACK!**

LOOK OUT! HE'S BECOME THE **HUMAN TORCH!**

SPLIT! AND THAT MEANS **ALL** OF YOU!

I'LL GET HIM! **I'LL** GET HIM!

I'LL **PROVE** TO GABRIEL THAT WE'RE ON **HIS** SIDE!

WATCH ME, GABRIEL! WATCH ME ATTACK THE **TORCH!**

I **HAVE** TO DO IT! I HAVE TO SHOW **GABRIEL** THAT WE'RE HIS **FRIENDS!**

I HAVE TO MAKE HIM **SEE** THAT-- OH **NO! NO!**

THAT WASN'T VERY **SMART** OF YOU, MISTER!

I HATE TO **RUIN** A GOOD SET OF **WHEELS,** BUT---

MY CAR! HE **MELTED** MY CAR!

NOW HIT THE **ROAD,** HERMAN--- BEFORE **YOU** GET THE **SAME!**

REED! WHAT'S **HAPPENING** TO US?

WE'RE **THREATEN-ING** THOSE WE'RE TRYING TO **PROTECT!**

WE CAN'T PROTECT **ANYONE** WHILE THEY'RE TRYING TO **KILL** US!

TORCH! HOW'S YOUR **FLAME** HOLDING OUT?

DON'T WORRY 'BOUT **ME!** I'LL DO WHAT I **MUST!**

THEN FORM A FIERY **SCREEN** ALL AROUND US!

KEEP THEM AT **BAY**-- WITHOUT **HURTING** THEM!

NUTS! A LITTLE **HURTIN'** NEVER HURT NO ONE!

OKAY, REED--- THIS'LL KEEP THEM BACK!

C'MON, ALL OF YOU! FOLLOW ME!

HEY! COOL OFF YER FEET, WILLYA?

THE STREET'S GETTIN' TOO HOT-- AN' I'M WALKIN' BARE-FOOT!

YOU CAN'T HOLD OFF THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE!

IF IT'S OUR LIVES OR YOURS-- WE'VE GOT TO SAVE OURSELVES!

THEM'S THE KINDA CRUMBS WE BEEN RISKIN' OUR NECKS FOR ALL THESE YEARS, HUH?

A BUNCH'A DUMB DO-GOODERS LIKE US OUGHTTA HAVE OUR HEADS EXAMINED!

FORGET THEM, BEN! KEEP FOLLOWING JOHNNY --AND DON'T LOOK BACK!

OKAY! OKAY! BUT WHERE'RE WE GOIN' NOW?

THEY'VE GONE, REED --AND SO HAS GABRIEL!

LOOKS LIKE WE'RE SAFE-- FOR NOW!

WE'VE SOMETHING TO DO-- BEFORE THE CROWD CAN RE-ASSEMBLE!

RIGHT HERE-- TO THE NEAREST TV NETWORK!

LOOK! IT'S THEM!

QUICK! YOU HAVE TO HELP US!

WE NEED YOUR BROADCAST FACILITIES!

NO WAY, MISTER! WE ALREADY HEARD WHAT HAPPENED!

LOOK-- HE WUZN'T ASKIN'-- HE WUZ TELLIN' YA!

BACK OFF, BEN! I'LL HANDLE IT!

NOW LISTEN TO ME-- YOU DON'T REALIZE WHAT'S AT STAKE--

MAYBE WE DO, SMART GUY!

THAT'S WHY THE ANSWER IS NO!

STILL WANNA WASTE TIME ARGUIN' WITH 'EM, STRETCHO?

THERE IS SOMETHING TO SAY FOR YOUR METHOD, OLD FRIEND!

LET'S MOVE!

I'VE GOT TO GET ON THE AIR-- FIND A WAY TO REACH PEOPLE--STOP THEM FROM LOSING HOPE!

HOW'S ABOUT STARTIN' WITH US?

I'M GETTIN' KINDA DISCOURAGED MYSELF!

BUT REED, IF HE REALLY IS AN ANGEL --WHAT CAN WE DO?

STUDIO

THE ONE THING WE MUSTN'T DO IS SURRENDER--

EVEN GABRIEL MUST LEARN THE VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE!

NO ONE'S BROADCASTING! IT'S AS THOUGH ALL TRANSMISSION HAS STOPPED!

OF COURSE IT'S STOPPED! WHAT DOES ANYTHING MATTER--NOW?

YOU CAN'T MEAN THAT! JUST BECAUSE ONE SUPER-POWERED BEING---

I MEAN IT, ALL RIGHT! JUST READ THIS LAST BULLETIN---

SEE FOR YOURSELF IF THERE'S ANY POINT IN GOING ON!

ALL OVER EARTH, MEN HAVE GIVEN IN TO DESPAIR--

ALL INDUSTRY HAS COMPLETELY SHUT DOWN! NO ONE WILL WORK!

EVERYWHERE-- THE HUMAN RACE HOPELESSLY WAITS--FOR ITS DOOM!

THERE'S BEEN LOOTING--- PILLAGING-- UNOPPOSED BY ANY AUTHORITY!

IT'S EVEN *WORSE* THAN I FEARED--- BUT THAT'S WHY WE'RE *HERE!*

QUICK-- SET UP THE AUDIO-VISUAL APPARATUS-- I WANT TO BROADCAST A *MESSAGE*---

I'VE GOT TO SOUND A *CLARION CALL*--- TO ALL *MANKIND!*

NO! IT-- IT *CAN'T* BE DONE!

THE *POWER* IS OFF! THERE ARE NO *CREWS!* THE NETWORK IS *DEAD*--- JUST AS *EVERYTHING* SOON WILL BE-- *DEAD!*

FOOTSTEPS-- UP THE *STAIRS!* THEY'RE *COMING* FOR US!

OUR TIME HAS RUN *OUT!*

REED-- WHAT DO WE DO *NEXT?*

WHAT *CAN* WE DO?

I DON'T *KNOW*-- WE'RE *STYMIED* AT EVERY TURN!

BUT WE'RE SAFER UP *HERE* THAN IN THE *STREETS!*

GABRIEL'S TURNED *EVERYONE* AGAINST US!

BUT WE CAN'T HANG AROUND *HERE* NEITHER!

IT DON'T TAKE *GENIUSES* TA LOOK FER US ON THE *ROOF* WHEN WE AIN'T NOWHERE *ELSE!*

YOU'RE *RIGHT,* BEN! WE'VE GOT TO GET *AWAY*-- FAST!

I'LL *FLATTEN* MY BODY-- YOU AND SUE *STAND* ON IT!

JOHNNY-- FLAME ON! YOU'RE GOING TO *CARRY* US!

I *READ* YOU, BROTHER-IN-LAW! WE'LL HEAD BACK TO THE *BAXTER BUILDING!*

OKAY, OKAY! STOP *GABBIN'* AND START *MOVIN'!*

HEY, MUSCLE-BOUND, CAN'T YOU *EVER* STOP MAKIN' LIKE A POOR-MAN'S *BOGART?*

WHO YA CALLIN' *MUSCLE-BOUND?* YER JUST *JEALOUS* OF MY BLUE-EYED *BICEPS!*

JOHNNY-- *CAREFUL!* LOOK WHERE YOU'RE *GOING!*

SPUNG!

HE'S *DROPPING* US!

WHAT'S THAT, REED? I-- *UNNHH!*

CAN'T-- CAN'T *GET* IT!

BUT DON'T *PANIC!* I'LL BILLOW OUT MY *BODY*-- LIKE A *PARACHUTE!*

MY *HAND!* QUICK-- MY *HAND!*

AND *I'LL* USE MY *FORCE FIELD*--

I'LL PROJECT IT *AHEAD* OF US-- RIGHT AT THE *GROUND*---

PERFECT, HONEY! IT ACTED AS A *SAFETY NET!*

THWOOP!

SEE WHAT YOUR BIG, FLAPPIN' *MOUTH* MADE ME DO?

NUTS! THEY SHOULDN'T LET YA OUTTA YER *PLAY-PEN* WIT'OUT A BLASTED *KEEPER!*

NOW WHAT'S BIG BRAIN STARTIN' TA *YAK* ABOUT?

HURRY, BOTH OF YOU--- INTO THE *BUILDING!*

WE'VE GOT TO REACH THE *FANTASTI-CAR* BEFORE A *CROWD* BEGINS TO FORM!

BAXTER

DARLING, I-- I NEVER *FELT* THIS WAY BEFORE, BUT-- IT ALL SEEMS SO *HOPELESS!*

MAYBE WE SHOULD CALL *MISS HARKNESS* --AND GO GET LITTLE *FRANKLIN?*

CLICK

AT A TIME LIKE *THIS*-- SHOULDN'T WE ALL BE *TOGETHER?*

DON'T *SAY* IT, SUE! DON'T EVEN *THINK* IT!

IF *WE* ABANDON HOPE-- THEN WHO'LL BE *LEFT?*

HOW'S ABOUT LESS *RUNNIN'* AND MORE *CLOBBERIN'?*

HOW'S ABOUT *CLAMMIN' UP* FOR ONCE?

SECONDS LATER, ON THE FAMOUS 35TH FLOOR---

NOW WHAT?

GET TO THE ROOF! PREPARE THE FANTASTI-CAR!

I'M STOPPING AT THE LAB!

I'LL STAY WITH YOU, DEAR.

BUT WHY THE LAB? THERE CAN'T BE TIME ENOUGH TO---

I'M NOT GOING TO WORK ON ANYTHING, SUE--

ALL I WANT IS--- A WEAPON!

WE MUSTN'T FACE GABRIEL EMPTY-HANDED AGAIN!

BUT, AGAINST POWER LIKE HIS--- DO YOU THINK YOUR BETA RAY WILL HAVE ANY EFFECT?

EVEN IF IT DOESN'T--I HAVE TO TRY!

HERE THEY COME, BENJY!

SO? YA WANT I SHOULD BREAK INTA A BUCK 'N WING?

DON'T YOU EVER TAKE ANYTHING SERIOUSLY?

WITH A KISSER LIKE MINE? YA GOTTA BE KIDDIN'!

SHOOSH!

REED! YOU'RE NOT ACTUALLY LOOKING FOR GABRIEL AGAIN?

I HAVE TO, DARLING! NO MATTER THE RISK--HE MUST BE FOUND!

AND EVEN MORE--HE MUST BE DEFEATED!

LOOK! THERE HE IS--FLOATING ABOVE US!

FASTER! KEEP HIM IN SIGHT! WE MUSTN'T LOSE HIM!

HE'S *IGNORIN'* US! HE'S TRYIN' TA MAKE US FEEL *SOCIALLY INSECURE!*

KNOCK IT *OFF*, BEN! THERE'S TOO MUCH AT *STAKE* HERE!

GABRIEL --STOP! WE MUST *TALK* TO YOU!

IT WOULD BE *USE-LESS!*

THE TIME FOR *TALK* IS LONG SINCE *PAST!*

NOW ALL THAT REMAINS IS-- FOR THE *FANTASTIC FOUR* TO *DIE!*

HE'S *TURNING*--- STARTING TO *GESTURE* TOWARDS US--ABOUT TO UNLEASH A LETHAL *BLAST!*

HIS *EYES*-- THEY'RE SO *COLD*, SO *MERCILESS!* THERE'S NOT A SPARK OF *WARMTH!*

HANG ON! I'VE GOT TO FIRE *FIRST!*

ZAAK!

WHAT *HAPPENED?* HE-- HE'S STARTING TO *FADE AWAY!*

HE'S *GONE!* YOU *DID* IT, REED! YOU *DID* IT!

NO! IT'S *WRONG* --IT'S *MAD!* IT'S NOT WHAT *SHOULD* HAVE HAPPENED!

THE BETA RAY DOESN'T *WORK* LIKE THAT!

LOOK! THAT SHIP-- IT'S RISING OUT OF THE WATER!

IT'S COMIN' RIGHT AT US!

HOLD ON! I'M SWITCHING TO FLANK SPEED!

IT'S GAINING ON US!

CAN'T CHANCE A CRASH--- OVER THE CROWDED BUILDINGS BELOW!

I'LL HEAD OUT TO SEA-- WHERE NO ONE WILL BE HURT!

NO ONE 'CEPTIN US, YA MEAN!

WE CAN'T ELUDE IT! I MIGHT AS WELL LAND--BEFORE IT HITS US!

WE GOTTA BE DREAMIN'! SINCE WHEN DOES A 20-TON FREIGHTER CHASE A FLYIN' FANTASTI-CAR UP THERE IN THE AIR?

SINCE NOW! IT'S PLUMMETING DOWN--GONNA LAND RIGHT ON TOP OF US!

BUHOOM!

JOHNNY! HANG IN THERE, KID! I'M COMIN' TO YA!

HE'S STILL ALIVE! BUT-- REED! SUE! WHERE IN BLAZES ARE THEY?

OVER HERE, BEN! DON'T WORRY-- WE'LL GET OUT OF THIS YET!

FIRST, WE'VE GOT TO RIGHT THE *CAR*.

FORGET IT, STRETCHO! LOOK OVER *THERE*! *COMPANY'S* COMIN'!

I DON'T *HAVE* TO LOOK! I *KNOW* WHO IT IS!

THAT SHIP *COULDN'T* HAVE FLOWN BY *ITSELF*!

SURELY YOU DIDN'T EXPECT YOUR PUNY *RAY* TO DEFEAT *GABRIEL*!

NO, I *DIDN'T*!

NO MORE THAN I EXPECTED AN *ANGEL* TO ACT LIKE A BLOOD-THIRSTY *ASSASSIN*!

YOU DARE SPEAK SO--- TO *ME*?

THEN PERHAPS YOU *STILL* HAVE SEEN FAR TOO *LITTLE* OF MY BOUNDLESS *POWER*!

POWER *ENOUGH* TO CREATE A GIANT *TIDAL WAVE* AT WILL!

A WAVE WHICH WILL HURL YOU AT *LAST* TO THE FATE YOU *DESERVE*!

BUT EVEN THE AWESOME *GABRIEL* HAS RECKONED WITHOUT THE UNCANNY RESOURCES OF THE WORLD'S *GREATEST* SUPER-TEAM---

AND, EVEN AS THE EXHAUSTED *MR. FANTASTIC* FINDS REFUGE ON A NEARBY ROOFTOP---

THE MASSIVE-MUSCLED *THING* USES HIS MIGHTY *FINGERS* TO CRUSH A *HAND-HOLD* FOR HIMSELF AND HIS BATTERED COMRADE---

SHEESH! I'M GONNA NEED ME A KING-SIZE *MANICURE* WHEN I GIT DONE WITH THIS CAPER!

AND *STILL* YOU TRY TO SAVE YOUR WORTH-LESS *LIVES!*

YOU CRUMMY *KILLER!* HOW MANY PEOPLE HADDA *DIE* DOWN THERE IN ORDER FOR YA TA FLUSH US *OUT* THIS WAY?

WHY NOT SEE FOR *YOURSELF,* DOOMED ONE?

MINE IS THE POWER TO SET ALL TO *RIGHTS* AGAIN!

WELL, I'LL BE A YANCY STREET *YAHOO!*

OKAY, OKAY-- SO YA DRIED EVERYONE *OFF!*

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE WAY YA BEEN THREATENIN' TA *KILL* 'EM?

I DID NOT SAY *I* WOULD KILL THEM!

I MERELY TOLD THEM TO *PREPARE TO DIE!*

SO WHAT'SA *DIFF-'RENCE?* YA *STILL* GOT 'EM ALL SCARED HALF TA *DEATH!*

SO PUT UP YER MITTS, 'CAUSE IT'S *CLOBBERIN' TIME!*

THAT SOUND OF *BATTLE!* IT MUST BE *GABRIEL--* AND THE *THING!*

REED! WHAT IS IT? WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

I DON'T KNOW, DARLING-- BUT WE CAN'T STAND BY WHEN BEN MUST SURELY NEED US!

HOLD ON! I'LL STRETCH MY WAY ACROSS THE ROOFTOPS!

YOU SHALL INTERFERE WITH ME NO MORE!

BEN!

I'VE GOT TO CATCH HIM--- BEFORE HE FALLS!

I'LL BRACE MYSELF, DARLING! DO WHAT YOU MUST!

THWANG!

NICE WORK, STRETCHO!

NOW BOUNCE ME BACK AGIN!

NO! BEN! YOU'RE NO MATCH FOR HIM!

SHADDUP! YA WANNA GIMME A COMPLEX?

AWRIGHT, BIG MOUTH-- THIS IS IT!

KOM!

I AM UN-BEATABLE!

SO NOW YOU KNOW--

YOU GOT THAT *WRONG*, FELLA-- YOU MEAN *UN-BEARABLE!*

NOW WE'LL SEE HOW GOOD YOU ARE AGAINST THE *TORCH!*

I *WEARY* OF THIS! IT IS TOO *SIMPLE!*

YEAH? YOU *STILL* GONNA SOUND SO BORED WHEN I REACH *NEAR-NOVA HEAT?*

I CAN'T SUSTAIN IT FOR *LONG--*

BUT IT'LL BE LONG *ENOUGH* TO FINISH *YOU!*

YOU THINK MERE *HEAT* CAN MENACE *GABRIEL?*

GABRIEL-- WHO IS AS MUCH AT *HOME* ON THE *SUN* ITSELF!

GABRIEL-- WHO HAS COME TO *DESTROY* YOU!

EVEN-- MY *NOVA FLAME* --MEANS *NOTHING* --TO YOU--

NATURALLY IT DOES NOT!

WHY DO YOU ALL CHOOSE TO *DOUBT* ME?

HE *EXTINGUISHED* JOHNNY'S FLAME! THE TORCH IS *UN-CONSCIOUS!*

LOOK! HE--HE'S NOW TURN-ING--- TOWARDS *YOU!*

I COULD *NEVER* MATCH HIS POWER---

BUT I'LL GO DOWN *FIGHTING!*

REED!

BUT THE WORLD IS *VAST*, AND FILLED WITH MANY *WONDERS!* EVEN AS *MR. FANTASTIC* FIGHTS THE IMPOSSIBLE FIGHT, WE TURN OUR ATTENTION *ELSEWHERE*--

-- TO THE DISTANT *SUB-STRATOSPHERE*, WHERE THE ENDLESS *VOID* BEGINS--

-- WHERE A LONE, ALMOST LEGENDARY *FIGURE* SITS, OBSERVING THE MADNESS BENEATH HIM---

THE FIGURE OF-- THE *SILVER SURFER!*

SO *MANY* TIMES HAVE I VOWED TO *IGNORE* THEIR ENDLESS BATTLES AND TRIBULATIONS! AND YET--

AM I NOT *WISER* THAN THEY?

THOUGH THEY HAVE *SHUNNED* ME-- THOUGH THEY HAVE *HOUNDED* ME--

AND MUST NOT THE *WISE*-- AND THE *STRONG*-- BE *MERCIFUL*, TOO!

I MUST NOT LET MY *GRIEVANCES* TURN MY HEART AS *COLD*, AND AS *BITTER* AS THEIRS!

I HAVE *WITNESSED* YOUR PLIGHT!

BUT *MINE* IS-- THE *POWER COSMIC!**

YOU *CANNOT* PREVAIL, FOR YOU ARE BUT *MORTAL!*

THE *SILVER SURFER!*

HE-- HE CLAIMS HE'S THE ANGEL *GABRIEL!* HE'S COME TO HERALD THE *END OF THE HUMAN RACE!*

PERHAPS SUCH A *FATE* HAS BEEN LONG *OVERDUE!*

NO! YOU CAN'T *MEAN* THAT!

* --AS SHOWN IN ISSUES #49, #50, AND A KABOODLE OF OTHERS! IF YOU *MISSED* 'EM, DON'T WORRY -- WORRYING IS *OUR* JOB! -- SYMPATHETIC *STAN.*

NOT EVEN THE *SURFER* SHALL STOP ME!

WHO CAN TRULY SAY WHAT IS FATED TO-- *UHHH!*

ON YOUR *FEET*, SKY-RIDER OF THE STARS!

ON YOUR *FEET*--- BEFORE YOUR *MASTER!*

YOU *KNOW* ME! YOU--HAD *EXPECTED* ME!

OF *COURSE!* AM I NOT-- *GABRIEL?*

PREACHER OF *DOOM*-- SOWER OF *VIOLENCE*--

YOU *CANNOT* BE WHOM YOU CLAIM!

THE *ULTIMATE POWER* NEED NEVER BE *FLAUNTED!*

THIS *SURFER* PROVES YOU --*A FRAUD!*

FOOL! IT WAS *YOU* THAT I SOUGHT--- *YOU* THAT I MUST *DESTROY!*

ALL *ELSE* WAS A MEANINGLESS *SHAM!*

THEN LET THE SHAM BE *EXPOSED*---

LET THE *TRUTH* NOW PREVAIL!

TRUTH? THERE *IS* NO TRUTH!

I HAVE THE STRENGTH! *I* HAVE THE POWER! *I* AM THE TRUTH!

AND *YOU* MUST BE THE FIRST TO *FALL!*

THERE IS ONLY THE WILL OF THE *STRONG!*

NOW LET THE SURFER DIE!

MY CAPE OF DESTINY SHALL WIND AROUND YOU--

AND NONE IS THE POWER THAT CAN THEN WRENCH IT FREE!

FAREWELL, SILVER SURFER---

LET IT EVER BE KNOWN THAT GABRIEL HAS DOWNED YOU FOREVER!

BUT-- WAIT! WHAT IS THIS? YOUR HAND WRENCHES LOOSE FROM MY CAPE!

HAVE YOU SO SOON FORGOTTEN?

MINE IS THE POWER COSMIC!

NO! NO! MY CAPE MUST NOT BE TORN!

IT IS MY POWER! IT IS THE SOURCE OF--MY LIFE!

THEN YOU SHALL HAVE LIFE --NO MORE!

KLUNK!

HEY! H-HOW ABOUT THAT--?

HE WAS JUST-- SOME KINDA ROBOT!

THE F.F. TRIED TO WARN US--

BUT-- WE WOULDN'T LISTEN!

BUT HIS POWER -- WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

IT IS ENDED! THE ONE CALLED GABRIEL WILL TROUBLE YOU NO LONGER!

A ROBOT! BUT WHO--? HOW--?

I FEEL LIKE I CAME IN IN THE MIDDLE!

I DON'T DIG NONE OF THIS!

AFTER ALL THE GRIEF MANKIND HAS CAUSED YOU, YOU RISKED YOUR LIFE TO FIGHT FOR US!

EACH OF US DOES WHAT HE WAS BORN TO DO!

BUT THE DANGER IS NOT YET ENDED! WHAT OF HIM WHO MADE THE ROBOT?

YOU NEED WONDER NO MORE!

AT LAST! THE TRUE FOE HAS CHOSEN TO REVEAL HIMSELF!

BUT LOOKIT' 'IM, WILLYA? LOOK WHO IT IS--!!

DID YOU NOT KNOW? COULD YOU NOT GUESS? WHO BUT GALACTUS CAN SHATTER A WORLD?

THOUGH HE WAS NOT AN ANGEL, GABRIEL DID NOT LIE!

HE WARNED THE EARTH OF DOOM--- AND THAT IS WHAT GALACTUS BRINGS YOU NOW!

EVEN IF YOU'RE ON ANOTHER PLANET, DON'T DARE MISS NEXT ISH!

(YOU KNOW HOW ANGRY IT MAKES GALACTUS!)

FANTASTIC FOUR

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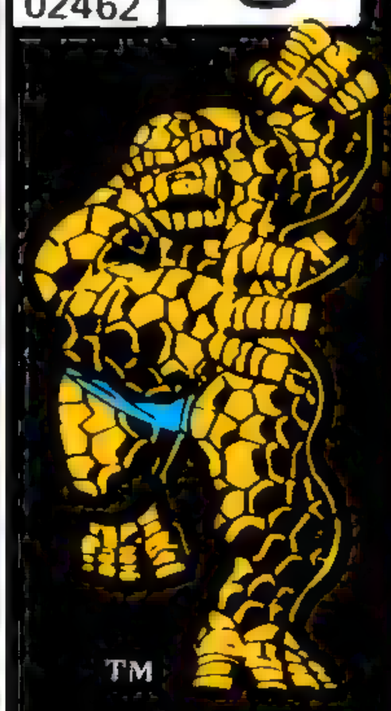

GALACTUS UNLEASHED!

THE FABULOUS F.F., AND ALL OF *MANKIND*, MUST FINALLY FACE *EARTH'S DEADLIEST THREAT!*

GALACTUS UNLEASHED

GARGANTUAN **GALACTUS**, DESTROYER OF WORLDS, HAS RETURNED TO THE **SOLAR SYSTEM** ONCE AGAIN, AND LANDED UPON THE PROUD BUT PAIN-WRACKED PLANET **EARTH!** AND NOW, PREPARE FOR **WONDERMENT** SUCH AS YOU HAVE NEVER KNOWN!

I HAVE COME FROM THE FARTHEST REACHES OF *SPACE*--TO PROCLAIM THE *DOOM* OF THE *HUMAN RACE!*

HAIR TYLING

BOUTIQUE

IT'S *GALACTUS!* HE'S COME *BACK!*

BUT WHEREEVER HE APPEARS-- *A PLANET DIES!*

WE THOUGHT OUR TROUBLES WUZ *OVER*-- BUT THEY'RE JUST *BEGINNIN'!*

WOOLWORTH

GIFTS

635

PRODUCED WITH PEERLESS PAGEANTRY

BY: STAN LEE & J. BUSCEMA
WRITER ILLUSTRATOR

EMBELLISHMENT JOE SINNOTT

LETTERER ARTIE SIMEK

GALACTUS--*LISTEN!* WHEN LAST WE MET, YOU GAVE YOUR *WORD*--

YOU VOWED *NEVER* TO MENACE US AGAIN!*

YOU--WITH YOUR MONUMENTAL *PRIDE*--YOUR EPIC SENSE OF *GRANDEUR*--WILL YOU NOW BETRAY A *PROMISE?*

*A GILT-EDGED **NO-PRIZE** IF YOU CAN REMEMBER IN WHICH ISH THIS HAPPENED! WE'D TELL YOU OURSELVES, BUT WE **FORGOT!***
--SHAME-FACED STAN.

THE WORD OF *GALACTUS* IS THE SPOKEN *TRUTH*--AS LASTING AS *TIME* ITSELF!

IN MY INFINITE *MERCY,* I OFFER YOU A CHANCE TO *SAVE* THIS PUNY WORLD!

THE LIVES OF MEN ARE *MEANING-LESS* TO ME--

--I WILL *TRADE* THEM ALL--IN RETURN FOR THE *SILVER SURFER!*

THEN *THAT* IS WHY YOU CAME TO EARTH!

I AM YOUR TARGET--AND YOUR *PRIZE!*

MY HERALD YOU *WERE*--MY HERALD YOU SHALL BE *AGAIN!*

SUCH IS THE WILL OF *GALACTUS!*

LET'S TACKLE HIM *NOW*--BEFORE HE CAN STRIKE *FIRST!*

WAIT, JOHNNY! HE'S TOO *POWERFUL!* WE HAVE TO *PLAN!*

WHAT'SA BIG *DEAL?* HE *WANTS* THE SURFER--LET 'IM *HAVE* 'IM!

WE GOT *OTHER* FISH TA FRY!

HAH! THE HERALD HEEDS HIS MASTER!

SURFER-- NO! TURN BACK!

TOO LATE! THE DIE IS CAST!

GALACTUS STANDS TRIUMPHANT!

NOT SO! DO WHAT YOU WILL-- I'LL SERVE YOU NEVER!

THOUGH YOU HAVE EXILED ME TO EARTH--THOUGH THE FREEDOM OF THE COSMOS IS DENIED ME--

HERE WILL I STAY, LIKE AN EAGLE CAGED-- THOUGH MADNESS AND HATRED ENGULF ME!

HERE WILL I LIVE! HERE WILL I DIE! CALL ME AN EXILE--BUT NEVER A SLAVE!

IF SUCH IS YOUR CHOICE, THEN A WORLD SHALL DIE WITH YOU!

THAT SINKS IT!

WHAT D'YA THINK WE'LL BE DOIN' WHILE YER TRYIN' TA PUT THE KIBOSH ON US?

WELL, YA WON'T HAVETA WONDER NO LONGER!

BEN! HOLD IT!

HOLD IT MY FOOT! IN CASE NO ONE TOLD YA--

IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!

WHAT.? HAVE YOU SO SOON *FORGOTTEN* WHOM YOU *STRIKE?*

YER--STILL *STANDIN'!*

BEN! TAKE OFF! THIS NEEDS *MORE* THAN MUSCLE POWER!

IT NEEDS --THE *HUMAN TORCH!*

FLAME ON!

MAKE A *BREAK* FOR IT, WHITEY! I'LL *DISTRACT* HIM!

=UNHH!=

TORCH-- GO *BACK!* THIS IS *NOT* THE WAY!

LISTEN TO HIM, JOHNNY! WE'VE GOT TO WORK AS A *TEAM!*

FOOLHARDY HUMANS! WILL YOU *NEVER* LEARN?

TEAM, SHMEAM! *I'LL* SHOW YA HOW--

SO IT'S GONNA TAKE MORE THAN *MUSCLE POWER,* HUH?

--THAT THERE AINT *SOME* WAY TA *TOPPLE* 'IM!

WELL, THERE AINT *NOBODY* SO BLASTED *BIG--*

NO MORE! NO MORE!

YOU KNOW NOT WHAT YOU DO!

YOU MUST NOT ANGER HIM!

NUTS! YA EXPECT US TA STAND AROUND PICKING DAISIES WHILE HE'S DREAMIN' UP THE BEST WAY TA PULVERIZE US?

AINT NO ONE EVER GONNA CALL THE BLUE-EYED THING A BLASTED DAISY PICKER!

THEY DO NOT COMPREHEND THE FORCES THEY MIGHT UNLEASH!

TO ME, MY BOARD! NOW SPEED IS OF THE ESSENCE!

HEAR ME, GALACTUS! IT IS THE SURFER THAT YOU SEEK!

DO NOT WASTE YOUR WRATH ON THOSE WHO MATTER NOT!

SO WE AIN'T EVEN WORTH HIS CRUMMY WRATH, HUH?

WAIT, BEN--WAIT! YOU'VE DONE ENOUGH!

WE'RE ONLY FLEAS TO HIM!

FLEAS INDEED!

TO BE BRUSHED ASIDE AT WILL!

I TRIED TO WARN THEM--

NEVER MIND THE "I TOLD YOU SO'S"!

WE'VE GOT TO CATCH THEM!

STRETCH, BLAST YA-- WHY DON'TCHA STRETCH?

HE CAN'T, BEN! THE IMPACT KNOCKED HIM OUT!

ARCADE

MY FORCE FIELD! I'LL USE IT TO SAVE REED, EVEN THOUGH IT MEANS I'LL--

NO! JUST RELAX! GO LIMP!

THE SURFER WILL CATCH YOU!

BUT REED--

WOW, BROTHER-IN-LAW! YOU CAME TO JUST IN TIME!

HE IS SAFE! THE TORCH HAS REACHED HIM!

SO HOW COME NO ONE WORRIES ABOUT ME?

WHAT AM I? A MACKERAL OR SOMETHIN'?

I'M A *BIRD BRAIN,* THAT'S WHAT!

THEY TRIED TA *TELL* ME NOT TO TANGLE WIT' *GALACTUS!*

BUT I HADDA DO IT *MY* WAY --THINKIN' WIT' MY *KNUCKLES!*

A FAT LOTTA *GOOD* IT DID US!

HOUSE OF FUN

NO TIME TO WASTE ON *POST MORTEMS,* BEN!

LET'S BE THANKFUL WE'RE ALL STILL *ALIVE!*

BILLY GRAHAM COULDN'T'A SAID IT *BETTER!*

BUT WADDA WE DO *NOW?*

WE'RE UP AGAINST A CREEP WHO CAN *WIPE OUT* EVERYONE ON EARTH--

AN' THAT AINT LIKE TACKLIN' A GANG'A *LITTERBUGS!*

I *KNOW,* BEN-- I *KNOW!* THE STAKES ARE LIFE AND DEATH FOR *EVERYONE!*

I AM THE ONE GALACTUS *WANTS!*

IF I CAN *FLEE*--THEN HE WILL *LEAVE*-- TO *FOLLOW* ME! IT IS THE *ONLY* WAY!

BUT YOU'VE SAID HE HAS *EXILED* YOU HERE! YOU *CANNOT* BREAK HIS *BARRIER!*

TRUE! BUT SOMEWHERE IN THE SKY-- THE *ANSWER* WAITS!

NOT EVEN *HE* CAN JOURNEY WITHOUT HIS *SHIP!*

VOTE FOR

AND IF *I* CAN REACH IT *FIRST*--

HE'S *RIGHT!* GALACTUS' *SHIP* MUST BE IN *ORBIT* ABOVE US!

IF HE CAN *GET* THERE BEFORE GALACTUS *SUSPECTS*--

NOBODY CAN MAKE IT *FASTER* THAN THE *SURFER* ON HIS BOARD!

GALACTUS *SHIP*-- VIRTUALLY A *WORLD* UNTO ITSELF! SUPREMELY *ARMED!* SUPREMELY *POWERED!*

--WITH *DEVICES* FEW HUMAN *BRAINS* COULD BEGIN TO *FATHOM!*

AND *THERE* IT WAITS--HOVERING ABOVE LIKE A GHASTLY, GLEAMING *ENIGMA!*

WITHIN ITS CAVERNOUS *HOLD*, THE MYSTERIES OF THE *UNIVERSE*--

AND, ONCE I *REACH* IT-- IT SHALL BE EARTH'S *SALVATION*, AS WELL! FOR THEN--

ARRHHH!

THE *BARRIER!* *AGAIN* IT HAS *DEFEATED* ME!

IN HIS *WISDOM*, GALACTUS PLACED HIS SHIP *BEYOND* THE POINT I CANNOT BREACH!

SO *NAUGHT* REMAINS BUT THE RETURN TO *EARTH*--

--TO FACE ITS *FINAL HOUR!*

BELOW ME--GALACTUS STRIKES ONCE MORE!

MY ATTEMPTED FLIGHT HAS SERVED TO ENRAGE HIM!

MEDDLESOME HUMANS! YOU SOUGHT TO DECEIVE ME!

WHERE HAVE YOU HIDDEN MY ONCE AND FORMER HERALD?

KRAK

SPEAK! SPEAK! I HAVE NO WISH TO HARM YOU!

BUT I MUST KNOW! I MUST KNOW!

QUICK-- TAKE COVER! LET ME HANDLE HIM!

SO! YOU WOULD FORCE ME TO SLAY YOU?

ARCADE

NOT EXACTLY, BIG MAN--

YOU'LL HAVE TO CATCH ME FIRST!

WITH LIGHTNING SPEED, AND WITH THE BLAZING CONTROL AND FLASHING DEXTERITY THAT ONLY THE HUMAN TORCH CAN COMMAND, EACH SIZZLING FIREBALL ASSUMES THE SHAPE OF ITS FLAMING MASTER--

--AS THEY WHIRL EVER FASTER AROUND THE RAGING GALACTUS--

ONLY ONE OF YOU IS THE REAL FIERY HUMAN!

BUT WHICH? WHICH ONE IS IT?

NO MATTER! TIME IS TOO PRECIOUS FOR ME TO TARRY ANY LONGER!

ONE BY ONE I'LL DECIMATE EACH FIGURE--

--TILL NAUGHT REMAINS BUT ASHES!

CAN'T KEEP IT UP MUCH LONGER!

SOONER OR LATER HE'LL--NO! WAIT!

THE SURFER--HE'S RETURNING!

GALACTUS! VENT YOUR WRATH ON ME--NOT THEM!

REED! HE'S BACK!

THE SHIP? WHAT OF THE SHIP?

BETCHA HE BLEW IT!

IT WAS IN *VAIN!* I HAVE *FAILED!*

I COULD NOT BREACH THE *BARRIER!*

SO *FLEE!* THE BATTLE NOW IS *MINE!*

US FLEE? *NO WAY,* WHITEY!

I DON'T WANNA LOSE MY SUPERHERO *MERIT BADGE!*

HAMBU KNISH

THRILLS! TEMENT!

FERRI WHEE

HOT D

FLEEIN' MAY BE OKAY FER SOME CRUMMY *YANCY STREETER--*

--BUT IT AINT THE WAY YA GIT TA BE A *LIVIN' LEGEND* IN YER OWN BLASTED TIME!

SSK RA K

ANYWAY, IT'S UP TO *US* TA CLOBBER *GALACTUS--*

--NO MATTER *HOW* YA SLICE IT!

'CAUSE THERE AINT NEVER A *COP* AROUND WHEN YA *NEED* ONE!

HEY, *TORCH--* GIT *LOST!* THIS ONE'S ON *ME!*

SINCE YER SO HIPPED ON *COSTUMES*, HERE'S A NEW *NECKTIE* YA CAN WEAR!

EARTHLING, YOU HAVE GONE *TOO FAR!*

NICE *TRY*, BENJY-- BUT NOW *SPLIT!* GET *OUT* OF HERE!

GET OUT MY *EYE!* I'M GONNA PULL 'IM DOWN TO *MY* SIZE, 'N THEN--*HEY!*

HEY--*WHOA!* WHAT'S GOIN' *ON?*

I HAVE TOYED WITH YOU *ENOUGH!*

I HAD NO WISH TO *HARM* YOU PUNY BEINGS, BUT--

THEN HARM THEM *NOT!*

THE TIME IS COME FOR *FINAL BATTLE!*

NOW LET THE *HERALD* GIVE CHALLENGE TO THE *MASTER!*

YOU DARE PIT *YOUR* POWER AGAINST *MINE?*

YES! THOUGH 'TWAS YOU WHO *GAVE* ME THE *POWER COSMIC--*

THE SURFER *DARES!*

NOW, WHILE WE HAVE THE *CHANCE,* WE'VE GOT TO FREE *BEN!*

BUT HE'S TRAPPED UNDER ALL THOSE TONS OF *STEEL!*

I CAN DO IT--WITH MY *FLAME!*

IF I CAN *MELT* THE GIRDERS *FAST* ENOUGH-- BEFORE THE *HEAT* CAN HARM HIM--

ZZZZZZZZZZZZ

KEEP IT *UP!* DON'T *STOP!* I'LL STRETCH *OVER* THE GIRDERS--

I'VE *GOT* HIM! HE'S *FREE!*

--AND *GRAB* HIM BEFORE THE FIRE CAN *SINGE* HIS SKIN!

BEN,! DEAR BEN--ARE YOU ALL RIGHT,? SAY SOME-THING!

HIS PULSE IS NORMAL, SUE,! HE'S JUST BEEN KNOCKET OUT!

BUT WE CAN'T WAIT TILL HE RECOVERS! THERE ISN'T TIME!

THE SURFER IS ALMOST EXHAUSTED--WHILE GALACTUS STILL STANDS UNSCATHED!

IT IS AS I FEARED!

NOT EVEN THE POWER COSMIC CAN MATCH GALACTUS' MIGHT!

SURFER--LOOK OUT! THAT WALL!

THUD!

TOO LATE! HE WAS TOO GROGGY TO HEAR ME!

FIRST THE THING--AND NOW THE SURFER'S KNOCKED OUT COLD!

REED! SUE! WHAT CAN WE--HEY!

THEY'RE GONE! THEY'RE BOTH GONE!

THE SURFER AND BEN-- *KNOCKED OUT!*

MY SISTER AND REED--*VANISHED* SOMEWHERE!

THAT-- THAT MEANS I'M *ALONE!*

ALONE WITH-- *GALACTUS!*

HAL OF MIRR

OKAY! IF THIS IS GONNA BE THE *FINAL LINE*-- LET'S DO IT UP *RIGHT!*

FLAME ON!

MEANWHILE, WHAT OF THE LEADER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR, AND HIS FABULOUS WIFE?

REED! WHAT *IS* IT? WHY ARE WE DESERTING THE *OTHERS?*

NO TIME TO *EXPLAIN!* WE'RE *NOT* DESERTING THEM!

HANG ON!

WE'VE ONLY *ONE* CHANCE AGAINST *GALACTUS*--

IT'S A THOUSAND-TO-ONE *LONG SHOT*--

FLY

BUT WE *HAVE* TO TAKE IT!

YOU MADE IT BACK TO OUR HQ LIKE A MAN *POSSESSED!*

BUT-- *WHY?*

OUR *MISSILE!* IT'S THE ONLY THING TO *SAVE* US!

WE'VE GOT TO LAUNCH IT *NOW!*

BUT-- IT HASN'T ENOUGH *ARMAMENTS!* IT CAN'T DEFEAT *GALACTUS!*

NOTHING ON *EARTH* HAS ENOUGH ARMAMENTS TO DEFEAT THE POWER OF *GALACTUS!*

BUT, THEN *WHY-- WHAT--?*

REED! WE'RE --WE'RE NOT JUST *RUNNING AWAY,* ARE WE?

OF *COURSE!* BUT FOR A *PURPOSE!* WE'VE GOT TO DO WHAT THE SURFER *COULDN'T--*

WE'VE GOT TO CAPTURE GALACTUS' SHIP!

THEN *THAT'S* WHAT-- *REED! LOOK!*

IT'S *OUT* THERE-- ORBITING JUST *AHEAD* OF US!

BUT IF THE *SURFER* COULDN'T REACH IT--

THAT'S *DIFFERENT!* GALACTUS HAD SET UP A *BARRIER* AGAINST HIM--TO ENFORCE HIS *EXILE!*

BUT IT ONLY STOPS THE *SURFER*-- NOT ANYONE *ELSE!*

MAN THE *CONTROLS*, DARLING! AND PRAY WE'RE NOT--*TOO LATE!*

IF THE OTHERS CAN JUST *HOLD OUT*--A LITTLE *LONGER!*

THEY *MUST* HOLD OUT! THEY *MUST!*

THIS BATTLE ABOVE ALL--WE MUST *NOT* LOSE!

NOT WITH THE FATE OF ALL *MANKIND* AT STAKE!

I'M--BEING BLASTED *BACK*--*AWAY* FROM THE SHIP!

I'M HURTLING OUT--INTO *SPACE!*

REED! OH NO! NO!

GALACTUS HAD A *PROTECTIVE FIELD* AROUND HIS SHIP!

IT'S SENDING MY HUSBAND TO HIS *DEATH!*

A *METEOR SWARM!* IF ONE OF THEM SHOULD *HIT* ME--!

BUT I *TOO* HAVE A PROTECTIVE FIELD!

A FIELD THAT WILL *SAVE* THE MAN I LOVE!

THEY ZOOM RIGHT *TOWARDS* ME--THEN RICOCHET *AWAY* BEFORE THEY CAN *HIT!*

IT'S ALMOST AS THOUGH--

THAT'S *IT!* IT'S *SUE!*

OPEN IT, DARLING! OPEN IT JUST *ENOUGH*--

SO I CAN HEAD FOR HIS *SHIP* AGAIN!

SHE *SAVED* ME--WITH HER INVISIBLE *FORCE FIELD!*

THAT'S *IT*, SUE! THAT'S *IT!*

SECONDS LATER--

THIS TIME I'M *READY* FOR THE SHIP'S *DEFENSES!*

IT'S *SUE'S* FORCE FIELD AGAINST *HIS!*

AND HERS WAS *EQUAL* TO THE TASK!

I *MADE* IT! I'M *ON* THE SHIP!

THIS TIME I'VE GOT MY *OWN* DEFENSE!

NOW I'LL ENTER THIS *DUCT*--AND BLAST MY WAY *INSIDE!*

I'M ON MY *OWN* ONCE MORE--

THE *FORCE FIELD* CAN'T FOLLOW BEYOND HER LINE OF *SIGHT!*

BUT I'VE BEEN ON MY OWN *BEFORE!* I STILL HAVE MY *WITS*, MY *POWER*, AND--*WAIT!*

I *MADE* IT! I'VE REACHED THE *CONTROL* CHAMBER!

I'M IN THE VERY *HEART* OF GALACTUS' SHIP!

BUT IT'S ALL SO *BIG*--ON SUCH A *GIGANTIC* SCALE!

EVEN IF I CAN *UNDERSTAND* THE COMPLEX STRUCTURE--

WILL I HAVE THE *STRENGTH*-- TO MAKE THE UNITS *FUNCTION*?

IF ONLY-- *BEN* WERE HERE!

HAVE TO-- STAY *WITH* IT! HAVE TO KEEP-- *TRYING*--!

*MEANWHILE, ON THE **SURFACE** OF THE MOTHER PLANET, FAR **BELOW**--*

I HAVE *SPARED* YOU THUS FAR OUT OF RESPECT FOR YOUR *VALOR!*

BUT EVEN PATIENCE SUCH AS *MINE* CAN BE EXHAUSTED!

SO, LET US *END* THIS TRITE CHARADE--

WITH BUT A *GESTURE* I STIR UP THE *SEA*--

AND THE *TORCH* SHALL FLY FLAMING *NO MORE!*

AYLAND

ARCADE

REST YOU, HUMAN! YOUR BATTLE IS ENDED!

NOW, HERALD--HARK TO THE WORDS OF GALACTUS!

YOU SHALL SWEAR--HERE AND NOW--TO SERVE ME FOREVER--

OR ELSE YOU SHALL WITNESS THE DEATH OF MANKIND!

NOT YET, GALACTUS! THE FINAL WORD IS STILL UNSPOKEN!

YOU!

YES, I! ONE OF THE PUNY MORTALS YOU HOLD IN SUCH CONTEMPT!

BUT NOT TOO PUNY TO GAIN MASTERY OF YOUR STAR SHIP!

NOW HEAR MY WORDS, GALACTUS--!

SWEAR TO LEAVE US IN PEACE FOREVER-- OR I DESTROY YOUR SHIP!

THIS PUNY MORTAL HAS THE POWER TO EXILE YOU ON EARTH!

NEXT ISSUE: THE WORD OF GALACTUS!

FANTASTIC FOUR

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

123 JUNE 02462

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

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FANTASTIC FOUR

™

THIS WORLD ENSLAVED!

FEATURING: THE SENSATIONAL SILVER SURFER!

MISTER FANTASTIC, LEADER OF THE FABULOUS F.F. MUST ANSWER TO MANKIND FOR--

THIS WORLD ENSLAVED!

THE SUPREMELY POWERFUL **GALACTUS** HAS THREATENED ALL OF EARTH WITH TOTAL **ANNIHILATION** UNLESS HIS FORMER SPACE-HERALD, THE **SILVER SURFER**, REJOINS HIM ONCE MORE! BUT, AT THE LAST MOMENT, **REED RICHARDS** HAS DARINGLY TAKEN CONTROL OF GALACTUS' **STAR SHIP**--!

WHAT? YOU DARE DELIVER A WARNING TO **ME**?!!

MORE THAN A WARNING, **GALACTUS!** IT IS MY FINAL **ULTIMATUM!**

SWEAR TO LEAVE US IN PEACE **FOREVER**--OR, BY TOUCHING THIS BUTTON, I **DESTROY YOUR SHIP!**

YOU'LL BE **STRANDED** ON EARTH--AS YOU'VE STRANDED THE **SURFER!**

AND NOW, A **RARE TREAT** AWAITS YOU IN MIND-BOGGLING **ADVENTURE FANTASY...**

STORY BY: STAN (THE MAN) LEE
ILLUSTRATED BY: BIG JOHN BUSCEMA

EMBELLISHMENT: JOE SINNOTT
LETTERING: JON COSTA

941 Z

NO.! YOU WILL GAIN NOTHING BY ACTIVATING MY FAIL-SAFE DESTRUCT MECHANISM.!

WAIT! HARK TO THE WORDS OF GALACTUS!

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN MY POWER.? HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN MY WRATH.?

THINK.! THINK OF THE DREAD CONSEQUENCES IF I SHOULD CEASE TO PITY YOU--IF I SHOULD CONSIDER THE PUNY HUMAN RACE AS MY ENEMY.!

EVEN NOW, I COULD END YOUR FRAIL LIFE WITH LITTLE MORE THAN A THOUGHT.!

BUT YOU WOULDN'T DARE! WHILE I HOLD THE DESTRUCT BUTTON, YOUR SHIP WOULD BE SHATTERED AS WELL!

"THEN WHAT OF YOUR ALLIES.? HOW EASILY I COULD SEAL ONE IN A CAKE OF DEADLY ICE!"

"WHILE AN ENERGY-DRAINING BOLT BLAST WOULD REDUCE THE ONCE-MIGHTY THING TO A TRICKLE OF FADING ATOMS!"

"AS FOR THE **FEMALE** YOU LOVE--BY TRANSPOSING HER **MOLECULES**, I COULD MAKE HER INVISIBLE--**FOREVER!**"

BUT WHAT OF YOUR **PLANET** ITSELF? AND WHAT OF THE HELPLESS **INHABITANTS** OF THIS ISLAND **EARTH**?

SHALL IT BE SAID THAT **YOU** ARE TO BLAME FOR WHAT HAPPENS TO **THEM**?

HOW MANY TIMES IN THE **PAST** HAVE I DRAINED THE **LIFE ENERGY** FROM WORLD AFTER WORLD?

AND NOW, WITH MANKIND **POWERLESS** TO STOP ME, HOW **SIMPLE** IT WILL BE TO DO IT **AGAIN!**

FOR UNTOLD *AGES*, BEYOND THE SCOPE OF MY OWN *MEMORY*, I HAVE WANDERED THE COSMOS, *ALONE* AND UNLOVED!

MY VERY *LIFE* HAS LOST ALL *MEANING!*

SO *LET* ME BE STRANDED ON EARTH! AS YOUR *WORLD* LIES A'DYING, LET *GALACTUS* DIE, TOO!

THE CONQUEST OF *LIFE* HAS AFFORDED ME NO JOY!

WHAT THEN SHALL I *FEAR* IN MY MEETING WITH *DEATH?*

THE CHOICE IS *YOURS!* DESTROY MY *SHIP*, AND *EARTH* DIES, TOO!

OR *SURRENDER* AT LAST, AND ACCEPT MY *TERMS!*

LET THE *SURFER* SWEAR TO BE MY *HERALD* ONCE MORE, AND I SHALL *LEAVE* THIS SAD, SORDID WORLD!

GALACTUS! LET THE HUMANS *LIVE!*

THE SURFER SWEARS TO *SERVE* YOU!

NO! YOU MUST *NOT!*

WILL WE *NEVER* LEARN THE LESSON OF *HISTORY?* NOT EVEN *SURVIVAL* IS WORTH THE COST OF ABJECT *SURRENDER!*

YOUR WORDS HAVE *WISDOM*--BUT GALACTUS IS *BEYOND* MERE MORAL CONCEPTS!

YOU HAVE BEEN *GIVEN* MY TERMS! NOW CONSIDER YOUR *ANSWER!*

THERE CAN ONLY BE PEACE THROUGH *GOOD WILL*--

--NOT THE *SACRIFICE* OF ANOTHER!

YOU HAVE UNTIL *NIGHTFALL* DARKENS THE STREETS!

HE'S WANDERING OFF-- HEADING TOWARDS THE *DOCKS!*

GRAB THAT THERE *SQUAWK BOX*, SOLDIER! GET *GENERAL ROSS*-- AND *FAST!*

HE'S SO *SURE* OF HIMSELF, HE'S NOT EVEN *WORRIED* ABOUT BEING *ATTACKED!*

THIS IS WHAT WE'VE BEEN *WAITING* FOR!

GENERAL! GALACTUS HAS REACHED THE *DOCKS!* HE'S A PERFECT *TARGET!*

STAND BY! AT MY COMMAND-- *FIRE!*

THEY'RE SO *SMALL*-- SO *WEAK*-- THEIR LIVES SO *BRIEF!*

WHY? WHY DO THEY SO DESPERATELY *CLING* TO THEIR BRIEF MOMENTS ON EARTH?

WHAT?!!

KA-BOOM

AGAIN THEY DARE *ATTACK* ME?

IS THEIR *MADNESS* SO DEEP-ROOTED--

--THAT *FORCE* IS THEIR ONLY ANSWER?

AND WILL THEY NEVER *LEARN*--

--THERE IS ALWAYS A *GREATER* FORCE?

I COULD HAVE *CRUSHED* THEM WITH A *GLANCE*-- BUT I SOUGHT TO *REASON!*

THE *FOOLS!* ONLY THE *UNTHINKING* MISTAKE PATIENCE FOR *WEAKNESS!*

L-LOOK! THAT *TRAIN!* IT--IT'S FLYING IN THE *AIR!!*

FLOATING AROUND THE *BUILDINGS*-- LIKE SOMETHING'S *GUIDING* IT!

GALACTUS! IT MUST BE-- *GALACTUS!*

LOOK OUT!

KRO

TAKE COVER!

THAT OVERSIZED *FREAK* MUST THINK HE'S MESSING AROUND WITH *KIDS!*

WHEN WE'RE *DONE* WITH HIM, HE'LL KNOW HE'S BEEN IN A *FIGHT!*

LAUNCH ALL MISSILES!

I AM TOO *WEARY* TO CONTINUE THIS CHARADE!

IT IS NEARLY *NIGHTFALL*-- THE TIME FOR *DECISION!*

I MUST *RETURN* TO CONFRONT THOSE WHO ARE CALLED THE *FANTASTIC FOUR!*

AS FOR THE FLYING *MISSILES*--

THEY SHALL DO *NO* HARM!

MEANWHILE, AT FF HEADQUARTERS--

THAT *BUZZING!* IT'S THE *PRIORITY ONE* COMMUNICATOR!

REED HAS BEEN *WAITING* FOR THIS CALL!

MY HUSBAND WANTED ME TO *TELL* YOU, SIR--HE HAS A *PLAN!*

HE THINKS HE CAN *SAVE* US FROM GALACTUS!

OF *COURSE!* OF *COURSE!* JUST *SURRENDER* THE SILVER SURFER AND WE'LL BE *RID* OF GALACTUS!

NO! YOU MUST *TRUST* HIM! THERE IS *ANOTHER* WAY!

HAS HE GONE *MAD?* ISN'T HE AWARE OF THE *DANGER?*

THE SURFER IS *WILLING!* LET'S PUT AN *END* TO THIS!

NOW LET ME MAKE ONE THING PERFECTLY ***CLEAR***--

RICHARDS HAS NO ***AUTHORITY***--NO OFFICIAL ***STANDING!***

PERHAPS YOU'D BETTER SPEAK TO HIM ***DIRECTLY,*** SIR! I'LL TRY TO ***CONTACT*** HIM!

WOMEN! IF IT ISN'T ***MITCHELL'S*** WIFE, IT'S--

DARLING, THIS IS ***SUE.*** ***PRIORITY ONE***--HE'S ON THE OPEN CIRCUIT!

I'LL HANDLE IT, DEAR! OVER AND ***OUT.***

DON'T ***WORRY,*** SIR! I PLAN TO ***RETURN*** GALACTUS' SHIP!

NOT WITHOUT GETTING A ***GUARANTEE*** FROM HIM THAT--

DIDN'T SUE ***TELL*** YOU? I HAVE A ***PLAN!***

GALACTUS GIVES NO GUARANTEES! I HAVE TO TRUST MY ***INSTINCTS***--

WAIT.' WAIT.' I'LL CALL A ***MEETING***--FORM A ***COMMITTEE!*** KISSINGER SAYS--

NO TIME! HE'S ***RETURNED!*** THIS IS ***IT!***

I HAVE COME FOR MY ***ANSWER!***

RETURN MY ***SHIP***--AND MY ***HERALD***--

OR LET EARTH PREPARE TO ***DIE!***

FOREGO YOUR ***THREATS,*** GALACTUS!

THE ***SURFER*** VOWS TO ***SERVE*** YOU--

--WHEREVER IN THIS UNIVERSE YOU MAY ***GO!***

THE FATE OF THE *WORLD* AT STAKE--AND ALL OUR ARMED MIGHT IS *USELESS!*

I'VE NO CHOICE BUT TO *TRUST* HIM! AND YET, WITH AN *ELECTION* COMING UP--

EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON *ONE* MAN-- *REED RICHARDS!*

HEY! DO YOU KNOW WHAT YER *DOIN'?* IF YA GIVE IN TA *GALACTUS* YA'LL BE HIS *SLAVE* FER LIFE!

HE LEAVES ME *NO* CHOICE! WHAT IS *MY* LIFE--TO THAT OF THE *HUMAN RACE?*

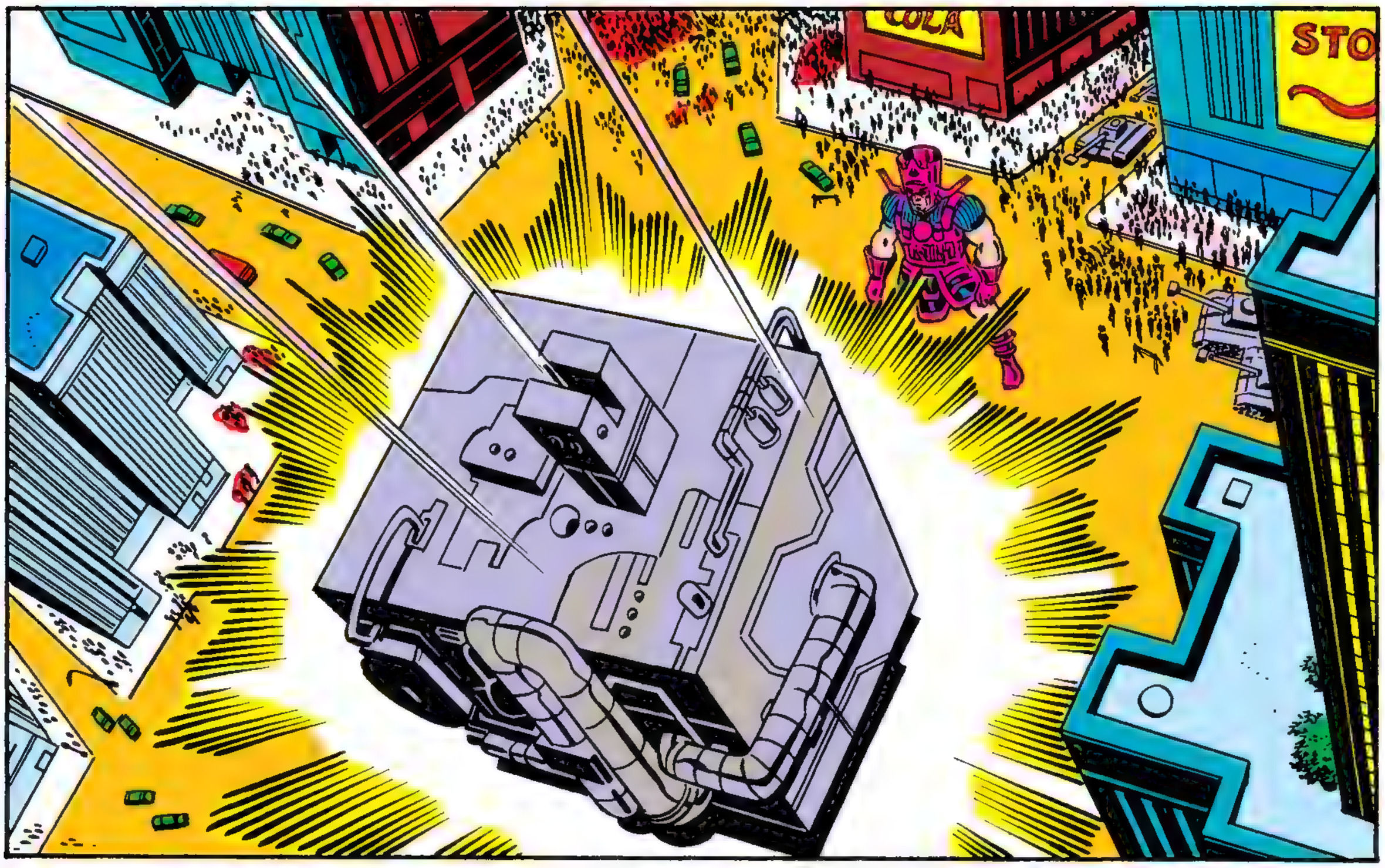
THIS IS *IT!* THE STAGE IS *SET!*

ALL THAT REMAINS IS-- THE FATEFUL *FINAL ACT!*

HEAR ME, GALACTUS!

I AM *RETURNING* YOUR SHIP!

THEN THE *VICTORY* IS-- *MINE!*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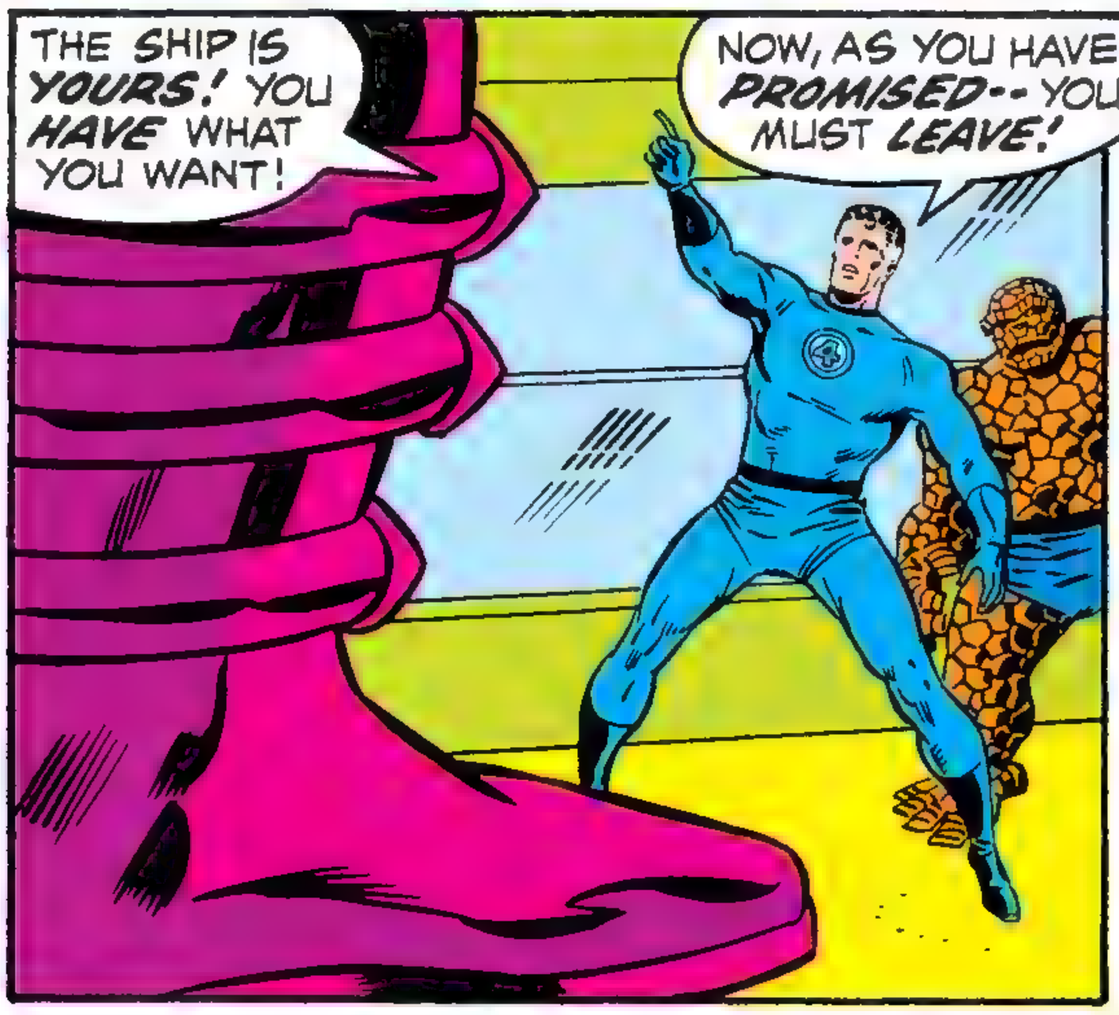
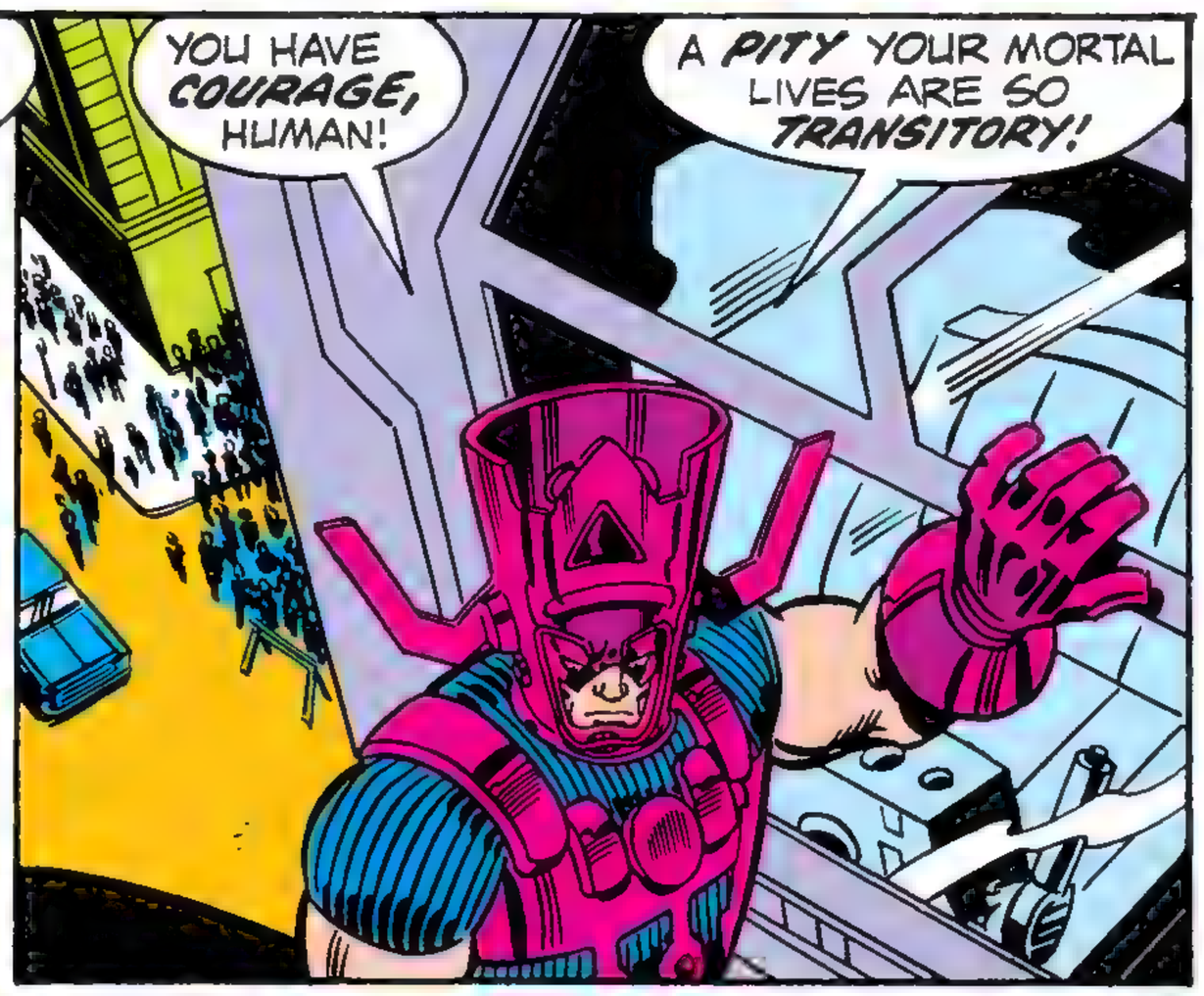
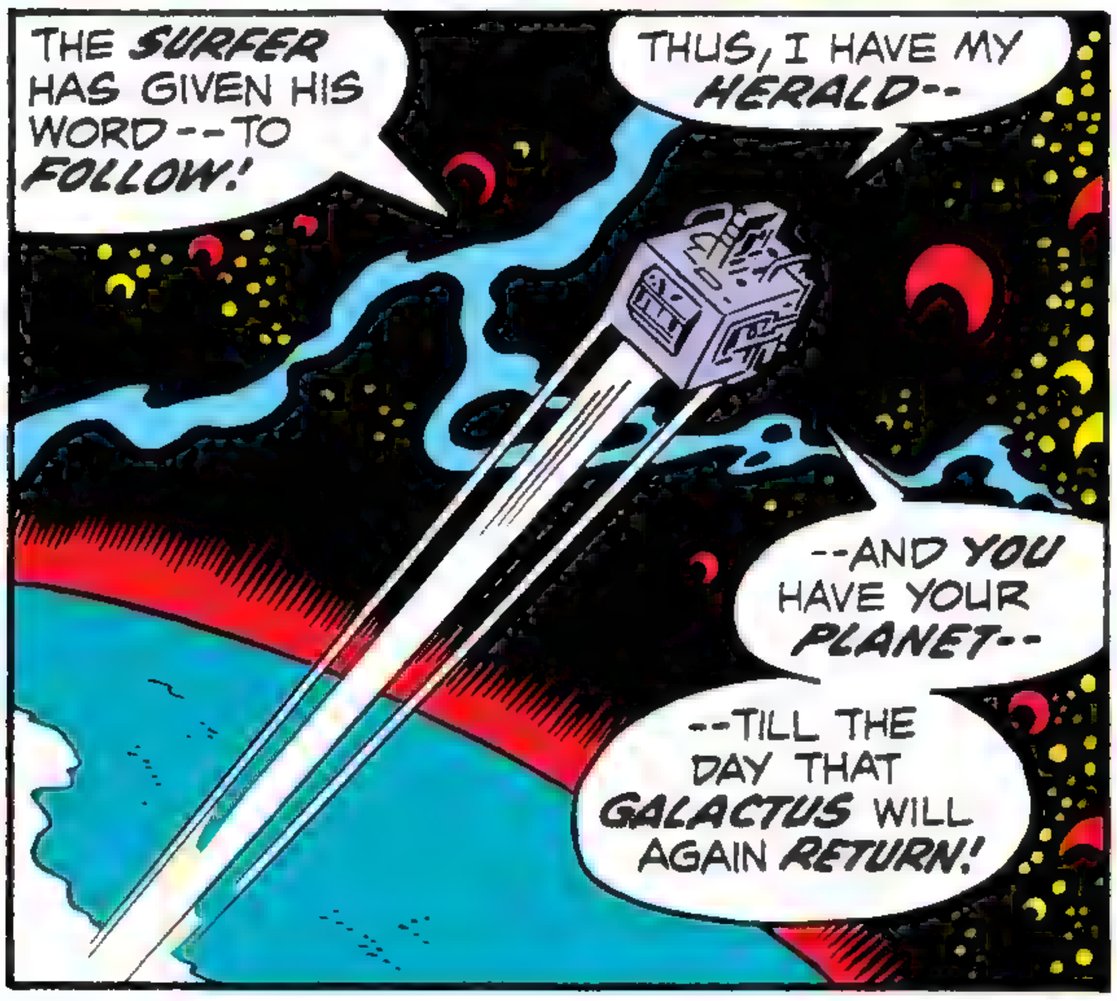
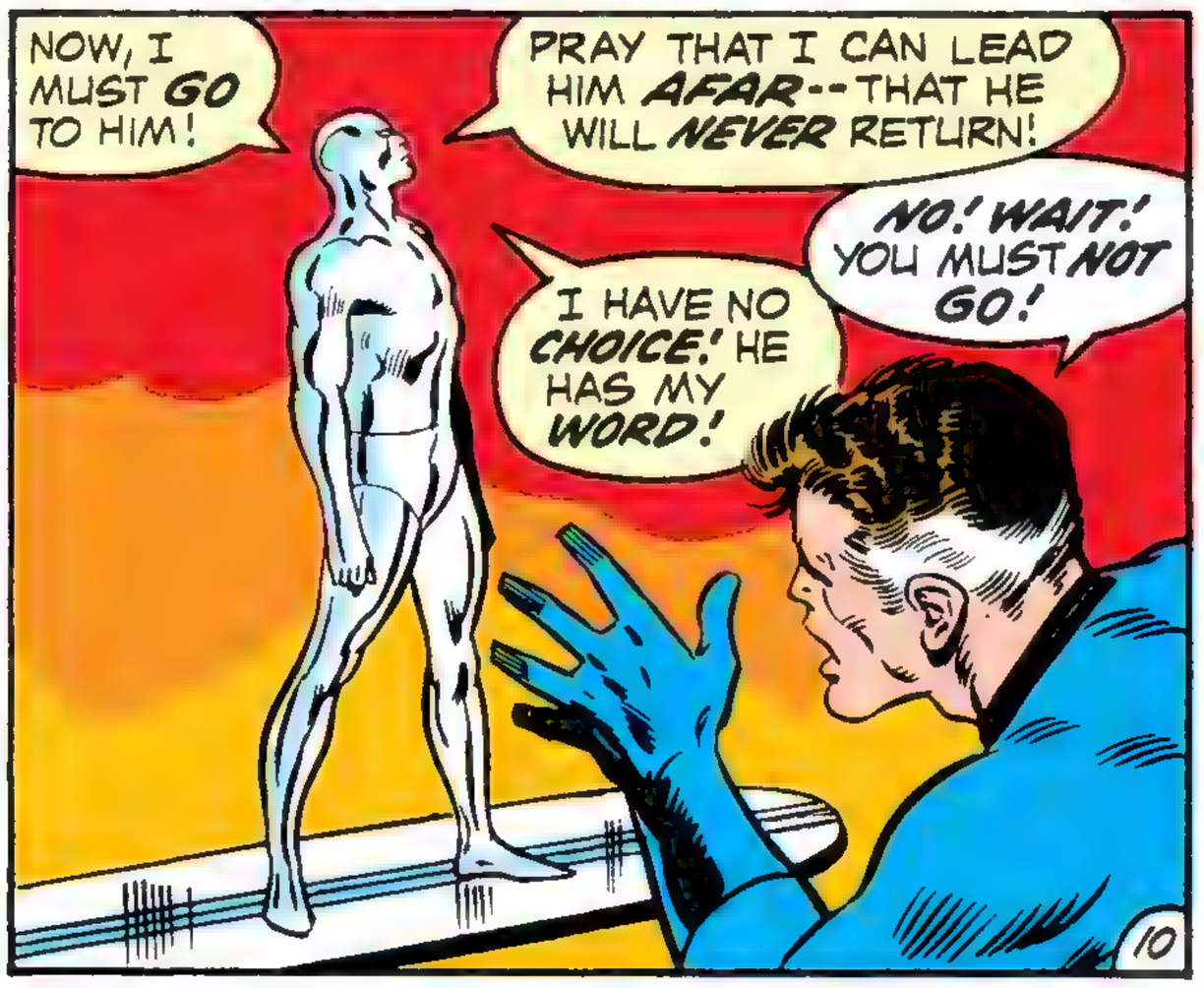

THE SHIP IS YOURS! YOU HAVE WHAT YOU WANT!
NOW, AS YOU HAVE PROMISED-- YOU MUST LEAVE!


YOU HAVE COURAGE, HUMAN!
A PITY YOUR MORTAL LIVES ARE SO TRANSITORY!


THE SURFER HAS GIVEN HIS WORD--TO FOLLOW!
THUS, I HAVE MY HERALD--
--AND YOU HAVE YOUR PLANET--
--TILL THE DAY THAT GALACTUS WILL AGAIN RETURN!


NOW, I MUST GO TO HIM!
I PRAY THAT I CAN LEAD HIM AFAR--THAT HE WILL NEVER RETURN!
I HAVE NO CHOICE! HE HAS MY WORD!
NO! WAIT! YOU MUST NOT GO!

I SAID WAIT!

I TOLD YOU I HAD A PLAN! YOU MUSTN'T JOIN HIM UNTIL HE-- SURFER! COME BACK!

TO HAVE A WORD WITHOUT MEANING IS TO HAVE A LIFE WITHOUT MEANING!

SO, HUMAN-- FARE-WELL!

NO!

YOU CAN ALWAYS CATCH UP WITH HIM LATER!

BUT FIRST, YOU'RE GOING TO LISTEN TO ME, IF I HAVE TO--

ARE YOU MAD? HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THE DANGER?

STOP! STOP! I-I CAN STRETCH NO FURTHER!

THEN RELINQUISH YOUR GRIP, RICHARDS! NOW!

NO! YOU MUST STOP! YOU MUST-- LISTEN!

ARRHHH!

RELEASE ME! RELEASE ME!

STRETCHO'S OUTTA HIS *MIND!*

HE'LL *KILL* 'IMSELF IF HE DON'T *LEGGO!*

I CAN'T JUST *STAND* HERE--DOING *NOTHING!*

FLAME ON!

MOVE IT, KID! YA GOTTA REACH 'IM IN *TIME!*

KRAK

IF GALACTUS HAS TO COME *BACK* FOR THE SURFER--*NO ONE* WILL BE SAFE!

SODA

RICHARDS! LET *GO,* BLAST IT! *LET GO!*

DON'T *WORRY,* GENERAL! *I'LL* GET 'IM! *I'LL* GET 'IM!

A *GUN-SHOT!*

YOU'VE BEEN *HIT!*

TO THINK THEY'D SHOOT ONE OF THEIR *OWN--*

THEY'RE EVEN *MADDER* THEN THEY SEEM!

HIS WOUND IS *MORTAL!*

BUT I MUST NOT LET HIM *FALL!*

HOLD HIM, SURFER! *HOLD* HIM!

QUICK! LET ME HAVE HIM!

I'LL GET HIM TO THE HOSPITAL!

IT IS TOO LATE FOR THAT!

TOO LATE? YOU-YOU CAN'T MEAN--!!

ENOUGH TALK! RETURN TO THE STREET BELOW--

THE ONE CALLED THE THING NOW NEEDS YOUR AID!

NO! NO!

STAY BACK! YOU--YOU'VE GOTTA STAY BACK!

KRAK KRAK KRAK

WHAT'SA MATTER WITH YOU GUYS? CAN'T YOU STOP 'IM?

HOW DO YA EXPECT US TO DO IT IF A POINT-BLANK RIFLE CAN'T?

SO YOU'RE THE HERO WHO SHOT MY BUDDY, HUH?

WELL, MEBBE THIS CAN'T DO REED NO GOOD--

BUT IT MAKES ME FEEL BETTER TO SEE YA WONDERIN' WHAT'S COMIN' NEXT!

SKRUNCH

FIRE! FIRE!

THAT'S *IT!* RIGHT ON *TARGET!*

AMMO

MAYBE THE *BAZOOKA* WILL STOP HIM--TILL WE CAN BRING UP THE *HEAVY* STUFF!

WOW! A DIRECT *HIT!*

SKK

THAT'S YER ANSWER TO *EVERYTHING,* HUH?

WHEN THE PROBLEM'S TOO *BIG* TA HANDLE, YA JUST GIT YERSELF A *BIGGER* BOOM-BOOM TOY!

WELL, WHAT D'YA DO WHEN SOME-ONE CAN GO *BOOM-BOOM* A LOT *BETTER?*

THROOM!

WHA-WHAT *HAPPENED?*

HE *SHATTERED* THE PAVEMENT-- WITH JUST *ONE* BLOW!

IT'S LIKE AN *EARTH-QUAKE!*

HE--JUST HIT THE *SIDEWALK*-- WITH HIS *FIST!*

ALL RIGHT, MISTER-- YOU'VE *HAD* YOUR FUN!

SO NOW IT'S *TANKS!*

YOU GUYS NEVER *LEARN,* DO YA?

COOL IT! WE'RE JUST FOLLOWIN' *ORDERS!*

SURRENDER-- BEFORE YOU BECOME AN ORANGE *INK-BLOT!*

NOBODY THREATENS THE *THING--*

UNLESS HE THREATENS THE *TORCH* AS WELL!

AND THE *HUMAN TORCH* DOESN'T SWALLOW *THREATS!*

STAY *OUT* OF THIS, MAN!

DON'T THINK WE CAN'T HANDLE *YOU!*

MEANWHILE--

EACH PASSING *SECOND* BRINGS HIM CLOSER TO *DEATH!*

NEVER HAS MY *SPEED* BEEN MORE VITAL THAN *NOW!*

THE SURFER *KNOWS* WHAT HE MUST DO!

BUT IT CAN ONLY BE *DONE* IN THE MIDST OF *TRANQUILITY!*

THOUGH WE HAVE *BATTLED,* IT IS TRUE--

NEVER CAN I CALL SUCH A MAN--*ENEMY!*

NOW LET THE SURFER'S *POWER COSMIC* BE UNLEASHED!

LET THE WOUND BE *HEALED*-- THE LIFE-SPARK *STRENGTHENED!*

IT IS *DONE!* REED RICHARDS *SHALL NOT DIE!*

YOUR *POWER COSMIC*-- IT *SAVED* ME-- WITH SECONDS TO SPARE!

IF ONLY *ALL* POWER COULD BE SO USED-- NEVER TO *HARM*-- ONLY TO *HEAL!*

EVEN *NOW,* AS WE SPEAK, BOTH THE *TORCH* AND THE *THING* STAND ALONE-- AGAINST THE *ARMY'S* ARMED MIGHT!

THEN-- I MUST *GO* TO THEM-- AT *ONCE!*

AND, AS THEY SOAR EASTWARD AGAIN--

SO THAT WAS YOUR PLAN! THAT WAS WHY YOU SOUGHT TO STOP ME FROM FOLLOWING GALACTUS!

YOUR BRILLIANCE IS NOT OVER-RATED!

SURFER! HOLD IT!

WE'RE OVER THE AREA WHERE AGATHA HARKNESS LIVES!

SHE'S THE ONE WHO CARES FOR MY SON WHEN SUE AND I ARE--

LOOK! THERE'S HER HOUSE NOW! IT GIVES ME AN IDEA!

AND SO--

WILL YOU DO IT, MISS HARKNESS? CAN YOU DO IT?

IT MAY SAVE JOHNNY-- AND THE THING-- IN CASE I CAN'T DO IT ALONE!

RETURN LITTLE FRANKLIN TO ME--THEN TAKE YOUR LEAVE!

ONCE HE IS SAFELY ASLEEP, I SHALL DO WHAT I CAN!

YOU ARE COURAGEOUS, RICHARDS--ENTRUSTING THE CARE OF YOUR CHILD TO A WITCH!

WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT SHE WAS AT THE TIME!

BUT SHE CAN PROTECT HIM AS NO ONE ELSE CAN!

STAY BACK! DON'T SHOOT! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING! THE THING IS ON YOUR SIDE!

NOT NO MORE, I AIN'T! IF IT'S A FIGHT THEY WANT--!

FLAME OFF, TORCH! DON'T MAKE US ATTACK YOU, TOO!

POST

HOLD YOUR FIRE! THE DANGER IS PAST! WE'RE ALL SAFE NOW!

IT IS USELESS! THEY DO NOT LISTEN TO YOU!

BUT I SHALL FIND A WAY TO MAKE THEM LISTEN!

MISS HARKNESS!

DRINK Cola

HOW? HOW DID YOU--?

I AM ONLY HERE IN ESSENCE-- ONLY IN SPIRIT! BUT THAT DOES NOT MATTER NOW!

WHAT DOES MATTER IS FINDING A WAY TO SET ALL FEARS AT REST!

CAN YOU PROJECT MY IMAGE-- MY VOICE FOR ME?

OF COURSE!

LET DAY TURN TO NIGHT! LET NIGHT BE AS DAY! LET TIME HALT ITS FLIGHT! LET SPACE MELT AWAY!

THEN, AT THAT VERY INSTANT--

LOOK!

EARTH IS SAFE AGAIN! GALACTUS WILL THREATEN US NO MORE!

HOW-- DID YOU GET HERE?!!

NO TIME TO EXPLAIN, SIR! JUST LISTEN--

NO SOONER HAS THE FATEFUL STORY BEEN TOLD THEN THE IMAGE VANISHES-- AND A MOMENTOUS CALL IS MADE--

GET ME THE COMMANDING GENERAL!

WHAT'S THAT? WHO? Y-YES SIR!

AS YOU WERE, YOU GUYS! IT'S ALL OVER!

ACCORDING TO THE PENTAGON, YOU GUYS ARE HEROES 'STEAD OF HEELS!

IF THE PENTAGON SAID WE WUZ BEIN' ATTACKED BY DISNEY-LAND, WOULDJA SWALLOW THAT, TOO?

I STILL DON'T GET IT, BUT I'M GLAD NO ONE WAS HURT!

KNOCK IT OFF, BEN!

OKAY, GENERAL! NO HARD FEELINGS!

WAIT! BEFORE YOU LEAVE-- THERE'S ONE MORE THING!

ALL OVER THE WORLD, THE PEOPLE ARE STILL PANICKING!

I CAN ANTICIPATE YOUR REQUEST!

YOU SHALL BE THE ONE TO SET THEIR MINDS AT EASE!

AT MY COMMAND-- SPEAK!

YOUR VOICE WILL BE HEARD THROUGH-OUT THE GLOBE-- IN EVERY NATIVE TONGUE!

AND, AS AGATHA HARKNESS PROMISES, SO DOES IT HAPPEN--

I KNOW THAT I STOPPED THE SURFER FROM FOLLOWING GALACTUS--

AND NOW, YOU FEAR THAT GALACTUS WILL RETURN, AND WREAK HIS VENGEANCE ON ALL OF EARTH!

BUT, THE SURFER DID NOT BREAK HIS WORD! AND GALACTUS WILL NOT RETURN, BECAUSE--

THE SURFER PROMISED TO FOLLOW ANYWHERE *IN THIS UNIVERSE.*

BUT, WHEN I WAS ABOARD GALACTUS' SHIP, I *CHANGED* HIS CONTROLS--

I *ADJUSTED* THEM TO TAKE HIM TO THE *NEGATIVE ZONE,* WHICH IS *NOT* IN THIS UNIVERSE!

THE *NEGATIVE ZONE,* WHERE THERE ARE *WORLDS ENOUGH* TO SUSTAIN HIM FOR COUNTLESS *AGES*-- SO THAT HE WILL *NEVER* RETURN!

THEN, IT IS *OVER!* I AM NEEDED NO MORE!

HOW *IRONIC* IT IS, RICHARDS--

YOU HAVE *SAVED* ME FROM AN EMPTY LIFE OF ENDLESS *SERVITUDE*--

--AND *LEFT* ME TO A LIFE OF *MADNESS*-- HERE AMONGST *MEN!*

AND NOW, YOU MUST *REJOIN* THEM!

GOTTA *HAND* IT TO YOU, CHUM! NO *WONDER* THEY CALL YA *MISTER FANTASTIC!*

I ALWAYS *KNEW* THE GOOD OL' *F.F.* WOULD SAVE US!

RIGHT *ON,* MISTER!

HUMANS! AS FICKLE AND INCONSTANT AS THE CHANGING *WIND!*

I MUST SOAR *ALOFT*-- FOR A NEW BREATH OF AIR--AND *SANITY!*

HE JUST HOPS ON HIS *BOARD* AND TAKES *OFF!* THAT CLOWN'S SURE GOT IT *MADE!*

DON'T *ENVY* HIM, BEN!

THINK OF HIS *AGONY!* BORN FOR THE *GODS*-- AND TRAPPED AMONG *MEN!*

NEXT

THE RETURN OF-- THE **CREATURE** FROM THE **LOST LAGOON!**

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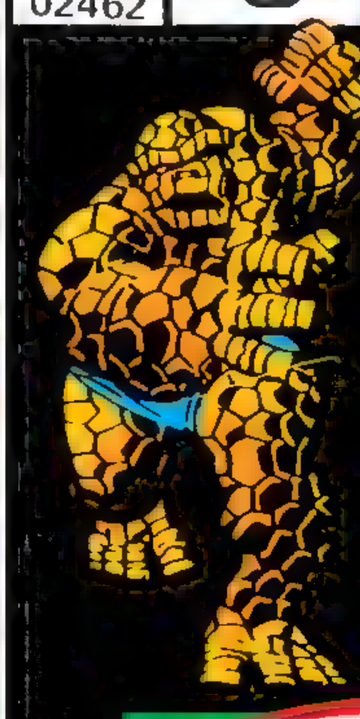


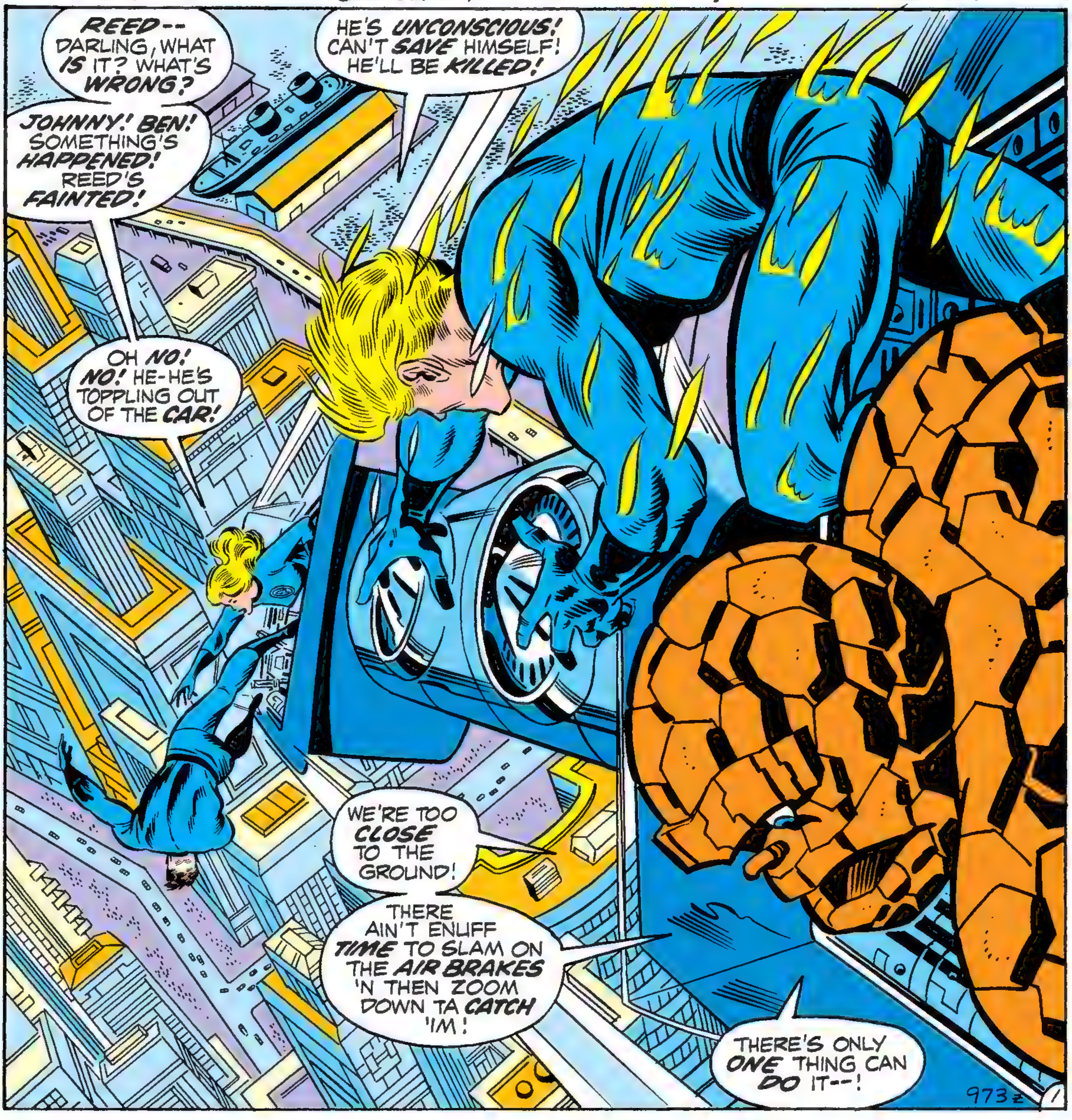
HOLD YOUR FIRE! HE'S GOT SUE! SHE'LL BE KILLED!
STOP HIM! STOP HIM! NO MATTER WHAT!
AMBULANCE ENTRANCE
IT'S NO USE! HE'S TOO STRONG!
WHY? WHY? WHY HAS HE CAPTURED SUE STORM?
WHO IS HE? WHAT IS HE ?

THE RETURN OF THE MONSTER!

THE FABULOUS F.F. FIND *MYSTERY* AND DEADLY *DANGER* AS THEY FACE...

THE RETURN OF THE MONSTER!

STAN LEE, WRITER • *JOHN BUSCEMA*, ARTIST • *JOE SINNOTT*, INKER • *JOHN COSTANZA*, LETTERER


REED-- DARLING, WHAT *IS* IT? WHAT'S *WRONG?*
JOHNNY! BEN! SOMETHING'S *HAPPENED!* REED'S *FAINTED!*
OH *NO!* *NO!* HE-HE'S TOPPLING OUT OF THE *CAR!*
HE'S *UNCONSCIOUS!* CAN'T *SAVE* HIMSELF! HE'LL BE *KILLED!*
WE'RE TOO *CLOSE* TO THE GROUND!
THERE AIN'T ENUFF *TIME* TO SLAM ON THE *AIR BRAKES* 'N THEN ZOOM DOWN TA *CATCH* 'IM!
THERE'S ONLY *ONE* THING CAN *DO* IT--!
973

GO *GIT* 'IM, KID!

FLAME ON!

HE'S FALLING SO *FAST!* DON'T KNOW IF I CAN *REACH* HIM-- IN *TIME!*

I'VE GOT TO *MAKE* IT! I'VE *GOT* TO!

I *DID* IT! BUT--MY *FLAME--!*

HAVE TO PUT IT OUT *FAST* ENOUGH--NOT TO MELT THE *FLAGPOLE*-- OR BURN *REED!*

HANG *IN* THERE, BUDDY! I'VE *GOT* YOU!

HE'S *OKAY,* SUSIE! JOHNNY *CAUGHT* 'IM AND--*HEY!* *NOW* WHAT?

THE *CONTROL MODULE!* REED BRUSHED *AGAINST* IT WHEN HE FELL!

IT--IT'S *JAMMED!*

BEN! BEN!

THE *FANTASTI-CAR!* IT'S HEADING RIGHT FOR THAT *SPIRE!*

THEY CAN'T *SWERVE* IN TIME! THEY'LL BE *KILLED,* UNLESS--

IT *WORKED!* THEY ZOOMED RIGHT *THROUGH* IT!

--UNLESS I CAN *MELT* IT--BY THROWING A *FIRE-BALL--!*

HURRY, BEN--BEFORE WE HIT SOMETHING ELSE!

AIN'T NO WAY TA FIX IT IN TIME, SO--

I'LL HAVETA FORCE IT LOOSE!

HEY! I PULLED TOO HARD! THE WHOLE GIZMO BUSTED OFF!

WE'RE DRIVING RIGHT FOR THAT WATER TOWER!

NO WAY, SUSIE! OL' BENJY'S GONNA SAVE US BOTH!

THERE'S NO WAY TO TURN NOW!

BEN-- JUMP! AT LEAST SAVE YOURSELF!

IF MATCH-HEAD CAN MELT HIM A STEEPLE--

THEN THE THING CAN WHUMP A WATER TOWER OUTTA THE WAY!

LIKE THIS!

BUT WE'RE STILL OUT OF CONTROL! WE STILL--NO! WAIT!

SAFETY

WHAT IS IT? WHATCHA DOIN'?

QUIET, BEN! I HAVE TO CONCENTRATE--

--LIKE I'VE NEVER CONCENTRATED BEFORE!

I'LL USE MY INVISIBLE FORCE FIELD TO MANIPULATE THE CONTROLS--

--EVEN WITHOUT THE BROKEN MODULE!

YER *DOIN'* IT, LADY!

YA CUT OUR *SPEED*-- YER MAKIN' US *LAND!*

SMITHS

I NEVER SAW NOTHIN' *LIKE* IT!

EVEN *STRETCHO* COULDN'TA DONE IT BETTER!

HEY, SPEAKIN' OF *STRETCHO,* WHAT *HAPPENED* TA OL' HIGH-POCKETS, ANYHOW?

THERE HE *IS!* JOHNNY-- HAS HE *RECOVERED* YET?

NO, SIS! HE'S STILL OUT *COLD!*

WE'VE GOT TO GET HIM TO A *HOSPITAL!*

AWRIGHT, *AWRIGHT!* THIS AIN'T NO *CIRCUS!*

S'MATTER? YA NEVER SAW A SNOOZIN' *SUPERHERO* BEFORE?

MOVE IT, WILLYA?

WE'VE GOT A *SICK* MAN HERE!

WE'LL *NEVER* REACH THE HOSPITAL THIS WAY!

BEN! *JOHNNY!* STAY *CLOSE* TO ME! I'VE A *BETTER* IDEA!

PEOPLE CAN'T *HELP* CROWDING AROUND WHEN THEY SEE THE *FOUR* OF US LIKE THIS, BUT--

YA CAN'T CROWD AROUND WHAT YA CAN'T *SEE,* RIGHT? *RIGHT!*

WH--WHERE'D THEY *GO?*

I HEAR *VOICES*--BUT THEY'VE *VANISHED!*

MAN! THOSE CATS CAN *REALLY* SPLIT!

THAT'S *IT,* BEN! *EASY* WITH HIM!

MINUTES LATER, AT THE EAST SIDE MEDICAL PAVILION--

WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S ALL THE RUKUS ABOUT?

IT WAS A MONSTER, I TELL YOU!

HE BROKE THROUGH THE WALL--INTO THE STORE-ROOM!

NURSE HALE! GET HOLD OF YOURSELF! YOU MUST HAVE BEEN DREAMING!

BUT-- WHY WERE YOU SLEEPING ON DUTY?

I WASN'T SLEEPING!

I SAW HIM, I TELL YOU! I SAW HIM!

AWRIGHT, BREAK IT UP, BREAK IT UP!

WE GOT US A SICK MAN HERE!

LOOK! SHE WAS RIGHT! THERE IS A MONSTER!

NO! IT'S THE THING! HE'S ONE OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

HE'S CARRYING REED RICHARDS!

WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM? TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU CAN!

WE DON'T KNOW! WE WERE JUST RETURNING HOME--IN THE FANTASTI-CAR--AFTER THE SILVER SURFER LEFT US--*

I'D SAY IT'S A CASE OF TOTAL EXHAUS-TION!

AND REED SUDDENLY COLLAPSED! HE--HE'S BEEN UNCONSCIOUS EVER SINCE!

JUST FROM READING THE PAPERS, I KNOW OF THE STRAIN THIS MAN'S BEEN UNDER!

*NO NEWS TO US, 'CAUSE WE READ LAST ISH, RIGHT? --SMUG STAN.

SHE'S GOIN' UP TO THE ROOM WITH 'IM, SO AIN'T NOTHIN' FER US TA DO BUT WAIT!

THAT NURSE'S STILL BABBLING ABOUT A MONSTER!

WHY WON'T YOU BELIEVE ME? I SAW HIM! HE WAS HORRIBLE!

HE WASN'T EVEN HUMAN! HE TORE THE WALL OPEN WITH HIS BARE HANDS!

YOU MUST CALM DOWN!

WOULDN'T IT BE SOMETHIN' IF THERE REALLY WUZ A MON--?

SOMETHING SUPER-STRONG MADE THAT HOLE IN THE WALL!

HEY! LOOK'A THIS!

WELL, SOMETHIN' SUPER-STRONG'S GONNA FIX IT FER 'EM.

NAMELY ME!

COME OFF IT, BENJY! HOW CAN YOU FIX A HOLE IN THE WALL?

JUST WATCH ME, JUNIOR!

SOMETHIN' LIKE *THIS* CAN MAKE A JOINT GIT *DRAFTY!*

FIRST THING YA KNOW, THEY'LL BE *SNEEZIN'* ALL OVER THE PLACE!

AN' THERE'S *ENUFF* CRUMMY GERMS 'ROUND HERE *NOW!*

THAT'S WHY I'M PULLIN' IT *TOGETHER* AGAIN, SEE?

HOW DOES *THAT* GRAB YA, KIDDO?

SHEESH! HE WUZN'T EVEN *WATCHIN'!*

HE TOOK *OFF* TA FIND THAT NUTTY *MONSTER!*

I MIGHT AS WELL KEEP *POKIN' AROUND!*

ARE YOU *SURE* I'M ALL *CURED* NOW, DOCTOR?

ABSOLUTELY, MR. BLARK! YOU'RE *THROUGH* HAVING HALLUCINATIONS!

GREAT! THEN I CAN GO *HOME,* AT LAST!

YURRK!

A LUMPY, ORANGE-SKINNED *GARGOYLE!* WALKING! BREATHING! *TALKING!*

YOU AIN'T NO PLAYBOY PINUP *YERSELF,* FATSO!

I'LL GIVE YA YER *HAT--* SOON'S I GIT MY *THUMB* OUT!

DOCTOR! *DOCTOR!*

I WANT MY *ROOM* BACK!

NOW I'M NOT ONLY *SEEING* THINGS--

I'M *HEARING* THEM AS WELL!

BOY! YA MEET ALL *KINDS* IN A JOINT LIKE THIS!

HEY! THIS LOOKS LIKE A *STOREROOM--* WHERE THAT NURSE SAID SHE SAW THE *MONSTER!*

I COULD'A SWORE I *HEARD* SOMETHIN'!

UHHH!

NOBODY-- CAN HIT ME HARD ENUFF-- TA FLOOR ME THIS WAY! BUT-- SOMEBODY JUST DID!

I HEAR 'IM-- RUNNIN' AWAY!

WHY? WHY DON'T HE STAY-- TA POLISH ME OFF?

MEANWHILE, IN ANOTHER PART OF THE SPRAWLING HOSPITAL--

I'LL NEVER FIND ANYTHING LIKE THIS!

THE PLACE IS SO BIG, IT WOULD TAKE ME HOURS TO COVER EVERY SECTION!

BUT, IF I FLAME ON, I CAN FLY THROUGH THE CORRIDORS AND REALLY GET SOMEWHERE!

SOMETHING BROKE THAT WALL, AND I'VE GOT TO-- UH OH!

TORCH! FLAME OFF! DO YOU HEAR ME, MAN?

YOUR BODY'S TOO HOT! IT'S AFFECTING THE TEMPERATURE! WE'VE GOT SICK PATIENTS HERE!

THE SUDDEN HEAT! IT--IT'S UNBEARABLE!

I MUST HAVE FEVER! I'M PERSPIRING!

I'M **SORRY,** DOC! I WAS ONLY TRYING TO--

SAVE IT FOR THE **PRESS,** GLORY HOUND! JUST QUIT CLOWNIN' AND GET **OUT** OF HERE!

I **WASN'T** CLOWNING!

YOU HEARD ME--**SPLIT!** IF WE SEE **DR. DOOM,** WE'LL LET YOU KNOW!

I CAN'T **ARGUE!** THE MAN'S **RIGHT!**

IT **WAS** A KICK DOING THE HOT-SHOT **SUPERHERO** BIT!

I NEVER ONCE **THOUGHT** OF THE SICK PEOPLE!

AND, AS THE ABASHED YOUTH HEADS FOR THE ELEVATOR--

OH, LORD--LET THERE BE NOTHING SERIOUSLY **WRONG** WITH REED!

LET IT BE JUST A SIMPLE CASE OF **OVERWORK!**

***SUDDENLY**--BEFORE SHE CAN COLLECT HER TROUBLED THOUGHTS--*

*BEFORE SHE CAN BRING HER POWER OF **INVISIBILITY** INTO PLAY--*

CHLOROFORM! I-I'M BEING-- **DRUGGED!**

CAN'T-- STAY AWAKE! EVERYTHING... SLIPPING AWAY... SLIPPING...AWAY...

HEY, YOU GUYS--LOOK! UP THERE!

WH-WHAT IS IT?

I DUNNO BUT IT'S ABDUCTING THAT GIRL!

HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!

DON'T COME ANY FURTHER!

PUT DOWN THE GIRL, DO YOU HEAR?

PUT DOWN THE GIRL!

HE'S NOT STOPPING!

THAT CASE HE'S HOLDING--

IT COMES FROM THE MEDICAL STOREROOM! HE'S STEALING-- UNHH!

LOOK OUT! HE'S MAKING A RUN FOR IT!

BUT HE CAN'T GET PAST ALL OF-- ARRHH!

THOK!

BAK!

RR-

SHOUTING-- JUST OUTSIDE THE CAR!

IF ONLY THIS DOOR WOULD OPEN FASTER!

HELP! STOP HIM, SOMEONE--STOP HIM!

GUARDS! GUARDS! HURRY! HE'S GOT SUE STORM!

WHAT IS HE? HIS FORM SEEMS HUMAN--BUT HIS SKIN--HIS FACE!

ZIK

AND HIS STRENGTH-- CARRYING THAT GIRL AS THOUGH SHE'S WEIGHTLESS!

KRAK!

HE'S WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR!

HE CRASHED THROUGH THAT WALL--LIKE IT'S JUST CARD-BOARD!

LOOK OUT! THOSE CARS!

HE'S RUNNING RIGHT IN FRONT OF THAT ONRUSHING CAR!

THE DRIVER CAN NEVER STOP IN TIME!

WE--WE'RE GOING TO HIT HIM!!

SKREECH

FLANG!

NO! NO!

SPOK!

IT WAS LIKE HITTING A *BRICK WALL!*

HE SENT THE *CAR* HURTLING INTO THE *AIR!*

I-- CAN'T LET IT *CRASH* THAT WAY!

BUT, WHAT CAN I--?

I *KNOW!* IF I CAN JUST *MELT* THE TAR-- *FAST* ENOUGH--

IT *WORKED!*

IT MADE THE TAR *SOFT* ENOUGH TO *CUSHION* THEIR LANDING!

STAY THERE! I'LL CARRY *YOU* AWAY FROM THE HOT TAR SOON AS THE *GIRL* IS SAFE!

BUT-- WHAT ABOUT MY *CAR?*

YOU *KIDDING?* I CAN'T CARRY *THAT!*

NO! I MEAN THE *DAMAGE!*

HEY, *WAIT!* COME *BACK!*

I SAVED YOUR *LIFE,* STUPID! THE CAR'S *YOUR* PROBLEM!

CAN'T LOSE ANY MORE *TIME..*

NOT WHILE *SUE'S* IN DANGER!

I SEE THEM!

DESPITE HIS STRENGTH, IT'S LUCKY HE MOVES SO SLOW!

HE'S HEADING FOR THE PARK LAKE! BUT-- THERE'S NO BOAT THERE!

HE SEES ME!

GOOD! HE'S PUTTING HER DOWN!

HE HASN'T UTTERED A SOUND! CAN'T HE SPEAK, OR--?

HEY! WHAT'S HE DOING?

HE'S RIPPING OUT THAT TREE-- WITH HIS BARE HANDS!

HE TOSSED IT--LIKE A JAVELIN--AT--

=UMMPFF!=

LOOK! THAT TREE! IT'S GONNA HIT US!

KIDS--LOOK OUT! LOOK OUT!

IT'S THE TORCH-- HANGIN' ONTO THE BRANCHES!

THE ONLY WAY TO *SAVE* THEM-- MY *NOVA BLAST!*

I'VE GOT TO MAKE THE TREE *EXPLODE!*

THERE! I-- I *DID* IT!

NOTHING LEFT TO *FALL* ON THEM-- 'CEPT A FEW DRIFTING *LEAVES!*

BUT-- *SUE!* WHERE DID HE GO WITH *SUE?*

THEY'RE *GONE!* NO TRACE OF *EITHER* OF THEM!

ONLY-- THE *WATER* BELOW!

MY *FLAME'S* GETTING WEAKER!

HAVE TO DESCEND-- AND *REST* A WHILE!

BUT-- WHAT HAPPENED TO *SUE?*

MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE HOSPITAL--

SOMEONE ALMOST *KIBOSHED* ME WITH *ONE* CRUMMY PUNCH--

AN' I NEVER EVEN GOT A *LOOK* AT THE CREEP!

IF THEY EVER FIND OUT ABOUT THIS ON *YANCY STREET*-- *FERGET* IT!

QUIE

MR. AH--EH--*THING*-- COULD YOU PLEASE BE A LITTLE *QUIETER?*

THE NAME'S *BEN GRIMM,* LADY-- 'N I BEEN *WAITIN'* FER YA TA COME OUT!

THEY'RE CONDUCTING DELICATE *TESTS* INSIDE!

EXAMINATION ROOM

WHAT'RE THEY DOIN' TA OL' *STRETCHO?*

YOU'LL FIND OUT-- WHEN THEY'RE *THROUGH!*

WHAT'S GOIN' *ON* IN THERE?

ROOM

KNOW SOMETHIN', SWEETIE? YER ALL *HEART!*

AND, WITHIN THE PRIVATE *TESTING COMPLEX*--

EVERYTHING CHECKS OUT *PERFECTLY!*

HIS *STRETCHING POWER* IS AS *FANTASTIC* AS EVER!

AND LUCKILY, HIS *BRAIN CELLS* SHOW NO DETERIORATION!

RELEASE HIM, NOW!

ONLY *ONE* TEST REMAINS--

HIS *BONE STRUCTURE* STILL VARIES FROM THE *AVERAGE* MAN--

--BUT IS PERFECTLY *NORMAL*-- FOR *HIM!*

APPARENTLY, THE *COSMIC RAYS*, WHICH GAVE HIM HIS AMAZING *STRETCHING POWER* SEVERAL YEARS AGO, ARE AS *POTENT* AS EVER WITH HIS BODY!

AND IT'S LUCKY FOR US *ALL* THAT HE, AND HIS THREE *ASSOCIATES*, WORK FOR THE GOOD OF *HUMANITY!*

AS FOR HIS PRESENT *CONDITION*..

OUR ORIGINAL DIAGNOSIS WAS *CORRECT!*

HE'S SUFFERING FROM *OVERWORK* AND EXTREME *EXHAUSTION!*

ALL HE NEEDS IS *REST*-- AND PLENTY *OF* IT!

BEN! THAT NURSE WAS *RIGHT!* THERE *WAS* A SUPER-POWERED--

YEAH, YEAH! I KNOW--I *KNOW!*

AND I GOT ME A BLASTED ACHIN' JAW TA *PROVE* IT!

BUT, WHAT'S *WORSE* IS--HE MADE OFF WITH *SUE!*

DON'T *WORRY,* KID! SHE CAN TAKE *CARE* OF HERSELF!

SHE CAN ALWAYS TURN *INVISIBLE* IF THINGS GIT TOO *HAIRY!*

BUT, JUST TA PLAY *SAFE,* TELL ME WHERE THEY *WENT* AND I'LL GO *AFTER* 'IM AGAIN!

IF *STRETCHO* WAKES UP AN' FINDS OUT SHE'S *GONE--LOOK OUT!*

THAT'S JUST *IT!* I DON'T *KNOW!* I *LOST* THEM!

THEN WHERE IN BLAZES ARE YA *GOIN'?*

BACK TO *HQ!* I'VE GOT AN *IDEA!*

WAIT FER *ME,* BLAST IT! I'M GOIN' *WITCHA!*

WHILE, AT THAT VERY MOMENT, IN A DANK, DESERTED CAVE--

SILENTLY, THE STRANGE, BROODING BEING PLACES THE SLEEPING GIRL UPON THE GROUND! AND THEN, SECONDS LATER, TWO DELICATE, LONG-LASHED EYELIDS FLICKER OPEN--

SOMEONE--PUT ME TO *SLEEP*--AND THEN BROUGHT ME--*WHERE?*

IN THE *SHADOWS*-- SOMEONE MOVING! SOMEONE *LARGE...*

HE MUST BE THE *ONE!* BUT--HIS *SKIN--!*

HE SEEMS STRANGELY *FAMILIAR!* BUT I CAN'T *REMEMBER!*

HE'S *TURNING!* HE HEARD ME *MOVE!*

IF I CAN BECOME *INVISIBLE* FAST ENOUGH--!

HE'S SO *SILENT!* SO *STRANGE-LOOKING!*

HE'S *ALARMED! ANGRY!* HE THINKS I'VE *ESCAPED!*

IT *WORKED!* HE'S RACING *OUT*.. TRYING TO *FIND* ME!

I'M LUCKY HE DIDN'T NOTICE MY *BONDS!*

I'LL OPEN THE ROPES WITH MY *FORCE FIELD!*

THERE! I'M *FREE!*

NOW--IF I CAN JUST PRY THIS BIG *BOULDER* AWAY FROM THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE--!

ONCE I'VE *ESCAPED,* I'LL LEARN WHO HE *IS*-- AND WHAT HE'S *AFTER!*

WHA--WHAT'S THAT *NOISE?* LIKE A GIANT *ROAR!*

OH NO! NO!!

THE BOULDER WASN'T AT THE CAVE MOUTH TO KEEP ME IN!

IT WAS TO KEEP THE WATER-- OUT!

SHOOSH

IT'S AN UNDERSEA CAVERN--AND I'VE JUST FLOODED IT!

EVEN WITH MY FORCE FIELD-- I CAN'T REPLACE THE BOULDER!

THERE'S NO WAY--TO KEEP THE WATER OUT!

IT'S GETTING HIGHER-- HIGHER--!

IF THAT GREEN-SKINNED POWERHOUSE WAS ANYONE WE'VE EVER SEEN BEFORE, THIS MAY TELL ME WHO!

ZZZZZZZZZZZZ

GLICK

HEY! WHY DIDN'TCHA WAIT FER ME?

BLAME IT ON YOUR BREATH!

NOW QUIET, BEN, WHILE I START THE PROJECTOR!

PROJECTOR? THIS IS ONE HECKUVA TIME FER MICKEY MOUSE!

I'M GOING TO RUN THROUGH THE VISI-FILE ON EVERY SUPER-STRONG BADDIE WE'VE EVER TACKLED--TO SEE IF IT GIVES US A CLUE!

HERE GOES--

WELL, WE KNOW IT WUZN'T DR. DOOM! HE WOULDN'T RUN FROM ANYONE!

CLICK

HIS SKIN WAS GREEN--LIKE THE HULK--AND HE SEEMED JUST AS STRONG--

BUT HE WAS SMALLER--QUIETER--DIFFERENT!

CLICK

FERGET IT! HE SURE WUZN'T THE MOLE MAN!

CLICK

WE'RE WASTIN' TIME! CAN'TCHA FIND NO BETTER PIN-UPS THAN A CRUMMY SKRULL?

CLICK

WE'RE NOT PLAYING GAMES, BEN! THIS IS-- HEY!

LOOK! HE'S THE ONE! WE'VE FOUND HIM! SAME SKIN--SAME FEATURES--SAME EVERY-THING!

YER RIGHT, JUNIOR!

IT'S THE ONE REED CALLED THE MONSTER FROM THE LOST LAGOON!

NO WONDER WE DIDN'T SPOT 'IM RIGHT OFF! WE NEVER GOT MUCH OF A LOOK AT 'IM LAST TIME!

IT WUZ ALWAYS TOO *DARK* TA GIT A GOOD SQUINT AT 'IM--

HE WUZ ALWAYS HIDIN' IN SOME BLASTED *CAVE!* *

*AS SHOWN IN ISSUE #97. --STAN.

AND, EVEN AS BEN SPEAKS --

DOCTOR, WHAT WILL WE TELL *MR. RICHARDS*-- WHEN HE REGAINS CONSCIOUSNESS?

WE'D BETTER KEEP IT *FROM* HIM A WHILE LONGER!

HUH? WHAT? WHAT WAS THAT YOU SAID?

I MEAN-- ABOUT THAT *MONSTER* CAPTURING HIS *WIFE!*

SOMETHING ABOUT *SUE*-- BEING *CAPTURED*--?!!

I--I DIDN'T REALIZE YOU WERE *AWAKE* YET! I MEAN-- YOU MUSTN'T *EXCITE* YOUR-SELF!

DON'T *WORRY*, SIR! WE CAN'T BE *SURE* THE MONSTER WILL *HARM* HER!

WAIT! WHAT ARE YOU *DOING?* YOU CAN'T--!

MONSTER? HARM MY *WIFE?* I'VE GOT TO GET *UP!*

GET OUT OF MY *WAY!* I HAVE TO *GO* TO HER-- *HELP* HER!

DOCTOR! DOCTOR! I CAN'T *HOLD* HIM!

MR. RICHARDS! YOU'VE *GOT* TO GET BACK IN BED! YOU'RE NOT *WELL!* YOU'RE SUFFERING FROM *EXHAUSTION!*

NO! IF SUE IS IN *DANGER*-- YOU CAN'T *KEEP* ME HERE!

I'LL *FIND* HER! I *MUST* FIND HER! *I MUST!*

STOP HIM! HE'S TOO *WEAK!* HE'LL *HURT* HIMSELF!

SLAM!

THUD!

I'LL *FIND* YOU, DARLING! I'LL *SAVE* YOU! I'LL-- UNNHHHH--

HELP ME GET HIM BACK TO *BED!*

I WAS *AFRAID* OF THIS!

SUE! SUE! SHE *NEEDS* ME! SHE *NEEDS ME!*

*IT WOULD SEEM THAT REED RICHARDS' **FINAL WORDS**-- BEFORE HE SINKS BACK INTO AN EXHAUSTED **STUPOR** ONCE AGAIN-- HAVE THE FATAL RING OF TRAGIC **TRUTH** TO THEM--*

THE *WATER*--IT'S FLOODING THE ENTIRE *CAVE!*

NO WAY TO *STOP* IT! NOTHING I CAN *DO!*

IN ANOTHER FEW SECONDS-- THE AIR WILL BE GONE!

I'LL NEVER SEE REED--OR MY BABY AGAIN!

I'M DROWNING! I'M DROWNING!!

20

NEXT *THE MONSTER'S SECRET!*

FANTASTIC FOUR

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FANTASTIC FOUR™

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HURRY, TORCH--HURRY! I CAN'T HOLD HIM-- ANY LONGER!

YOU'VE GOT TO, REED! IT'S BEN'S ONLY CHANCE!

ACTION! ACTION! ACTION! WITH A MIGHTY MARVEL TWIST!

THE MONSTER'S SECRET!

HOW CAN THE FABULOUS F.F. SURVIVE LONG ENOUGH TO LEARN--

THE MONSTER'S SECRET!

IN WHICH WE LEARN THE WHO, THE WHAT, AND THE WHY OF ONE OF THE WORLD'S STRANGEST MYSTERIES!

IN ANOTHER FEW SECONDS-- THE AIR WILL BE *GONE!*

I'LL NEVER SEE *REED*-- OR MY *BABY* AGAIN!

I'M DROWNING! I'M DROWNING!

A STAN LEE // JOHN BUSCEMA ~PRODUCTION~ JOE SINNOTT, EMBELLISHER

JOHN COSTANZA, LETTERER

IF YOU MISSED LAST ISH, WE'LL CLUE YOU IN AS WE THUNDER ALONG -- BUT, AS **SUE STORM** FACES A WATERY DOOM, TRAPPED WITHIN A HIDDEN CAVE, THERE'S NO TIME TO STOP FOR A SYNOPSIS **NOW!** SO, HANG IN THERE, WIDE-EYED ONE-- WE'RE **OFF--!**

THE WATER'S OVER MY *HEAD* NOW!

BUT I MUSTN'T *PANIC!* EVEN *WATER* CONTAINS AN AMOUNT OF *OXYGEN!*

MY *INVISIBLE FORCE FIELD* SHOULD BE ABLE TO SAVE ME--

--AT LEAST FOR A *MINUTE* OR TWO!

IF I CAN JUST USE ENOUGH *FORCE*-- TO HOLD BACK THE *WATER*-- IN ORDER TO--

THERE! I *DID* IT! I *DID* IT!

I CREATED AN *AIR POCKET*--BIG ENOUGH TO *SURROUND* ME!

BUT-- IT CAN'T LAST MUCH *LONGER!*

AND THE THRUST OF THE *CURRENT*-- IT'S BOUNCING ME *HELPLESSLY!*

THERE'S-- NOTHING I CAN *DO!*

BUT I MUSTN'T GIVE *UP!* I *MUSTN'T!*

I'VE MY *CHILD* TO THINK OF! AND *REED*-- MY DARLING *REED!*

*AT THAT VERY MOMENT, THERE ARE **OTHERS** WHO ARE **ALSO** THINKING OF THE DESPERATELY STRUGGLING **REED RICHARDS**--*

HOLD HIM! DON'T LET HIM GET UP!

IT'S FOR YOUR OWN *GOOD*, RICHARDS!

YOU'RE STILL TOO *WEAK* TO GET OUT OF BED!

NO! NO! SUE'S IN DANGER! I MUST GO TO HER! I MUST!

MY LIFE DOESN'T MATTER! SHE NEEDS ME! I CAN'T FAIL HER NOW!

HURRY WITH THAT TRANQUIL-IZER!

WE CAN'T HOLD HIM MUCH LONGER!

I HATED TO DO IT! I KNOW HOW HE FELT. BUT WE HAD NO CHOICE!

WE'RE DOCTORS! WE CAN'T LET HIM KILL HIMSELF!

THAT DOES IT! HE'LL SLEEP FOR A WHILE.

BUT HE KNOWS THAT HIS WIFE WAS CAPTURED BY THAT-- THAT MONSTER!

WHAT IF HE WAKES UP TO LEARN SHE'S BEEN MURDERED-- WHEN HE MIGHT HAVE SAVED HER?

I KNOW! I TOLD YOU IT WASN'T AN EASY DECISION!

BUT EVEN THOUGH THE MONSTER RAN OFF WITH HER, THE TORCH AND THE THING WILL SOON BE AFTER HIM!

I ONLY PRAY THEY DO NOT FAIL!

AND, SPEAKING OF THE REMAINING TWO FF'ERS--

THAT'S HIM, BEN! THAT'S THE ONE!

WE SHOULD HAVE GUESSED WHO HE WAS FROM THE BEGINNING!

HE'S THE ONE I CHASED FROM THE HOSPITAL!

YEAH! A CREEP LIKE THAT IS KINDA HARD TA FERGET!

REED CALLED HIM THE MONSTER FROM THE LOST LAGOON!

BUT WE NEVER THOUGHT HE'D RETURN AGAIN!

RETURN FROM *WHERE?* BETWEEN THE *KREES,* AND THE *SKRULLS,* 'N ALL THE *OTHER* DINGBATS WE BEEN TANGLIN' WITH FER YEARS, I CAN'T REMEMBER WHERE HE *HAILED* FROM!

THAT'S JUST *IT,* BENJY! WE NEVER *KNEW!*

HUH? SAY THAT *AGIN,* WILLYA?

THINK, BIG BUDDY! THAT TIME WE WERE OFF THE COAST OF *FLORIDA,* INVESTIGATING THOSE STRANGE *SHIP SINKINGS--* *

EVERYTHING *LOOKS* PEACEFUL ENOUGH.

BUT THEM SHIPS AIN'T BEEN VANISHIN' BY *THEMSELVES!*

* *FROM ISSUE # 97-- ANOTHER MARVEL MILESTONE!* --SHY STAN.

*"REMEMBER HOW WE SAW THAT GUY WHO WORKED AT THE **SEAQUARIUM**? WE DECIDED TO MAKE HIM OUR **GUIDE,** AS WE SEARCHED THE UNDERSEA **CAVES**..."*

I DON'T *GET* IT! YOU KNOW HOW *SLIPPERY* A WET *PURPOISE* IS! HOW DOES HE HOLD *ON?*

SHEESH! IZZAT ALL YA GOTTA *WORRY* ABOUT-- HOWTA HANG ONTO A GREASY *FISH?*

*"WHEN WE FINALLY HEADED FOR THE **CAVES** BELOW, HE NEVER SAID A **WORD**-- ALL DURING THE DEEP DESCENT-- "*

*"FINALLY, HE SEEMED TO SENSE REED'S **SUSPICIONS** ABOUT HIM-- "*

SOMETHING'S *WRONG!* THE WAY HE'S *STARING* AT US--!

*"AND THEN, IT **HAPPENED!** WITH A BURST OF **SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH** HE SMASHED RIGHT THRU THE **SHIP**--!' "*

"IF NOT FOR **YOU**, BEN, WE'D PROBABLY HAVE **DROWNED** ON THE SPOT!"

"YEAH, KID-- **YEAH!** I REMEMBER NOW!"

"THEN, WHEN YOU FINALLY FOUND AN **AIR-CAVE** FOR US, WE **SAW** HIM--!"

"AND NOW WE KNOW-- **HE** WAS OUR GUIDE --IN A **HUMAN DISGUISE!**"

"AND NOT EVEN **YOU** HAD THE STRENGTH TO **STOP** HIM FROM WHAT HE WAS TRYING TO **DO**--"

"HE WAS BRINGING **WATER**-- THE ONE ELEMENT HE **NEEDED**-- TO HIS DAMAGED **SPACE SHIP**-- THE SHIP THAT HAD **CRASH LANDED** HERE ON EARTH, DURING A JOURNEY TO SOMEWHERE BEYOND THE STARS!"

HEY! HE NEVER MEANT NO HARM **AFTER** ALL!

NOW THAT HE'S **FOUND** WHAT HE WANTED, HE'S IN A HURRY TO **LEAVE!**

BUT-- WHO **ELSE** IS WAITING INSIDE THE SHIP?

"THEN, JUST BEFORE TAKE-OFF, WE **SAW** OUR ANSWER--"

"THERE WAS A **FEMALE** ABOARD-- WHO WAS UNDOUBTEDLY HIS **MATE!**"

"THAT WAS THE **END** OF IT! WE NEVER LEARNED ANYMORE **ABOUT** HIM-- BUT, CONSIDERING HIS **POWER**, WE WERE GLAD TO SEE HIM **GO!**"

OKAY, OKAY! I *GIT* THE MESSAGE!

BUT THAT *STILL* DON'T TELL US WHY HE CAME *BACK*-- OR WHY HE LATCHED ONTA *SUSIE!*

THAT'S WHAT WE'RE GONNA FIND *OUT*-- RIGHT *NOW!*

NOW THAT WE KNOW WHO HE *IS,* I'VE GOT AN IDEA HOW TO *TACKLE* HIM!

HOLD IT, JUNIOR! ANY *TACKLIN'* TO BE DONE-- THAT'S *MY* DEPARTMENT!

MEANWHILE, AS THE OXYGEN SLOWLY BECOMES EXHAUSTED WITHIN THE GRADUALLY WEAKENING FORCE FIELD--

CAN'T-- STAY CONSCIOUS-- MUCH LONGER!

IF SOMETHING-- DOESN'T HAPPEN SOON--!

SUDDENLY, AT THAT FATEFUL MOMENT--

THE *MONSTER!* HE'S *BACK!* HE-- HE *SEES* ME!

HE'S DIGGING HIS HAND-- INTO THE *ROCK* BELOW-- LIKE A LIVING *STEAM SHOVEL!*

THAT GIGANTIC *SLAB* HE'S HOLDING-- IT MUST WEIGH *TONS!* BUT *WHY--?*

WHAT IF-- HE'S PLANNING TO-- *CRUSH* ME WITH IT?!!

NO! HE *RAMMED* IT AGAINST THE *MOUTH* OF THE CAVE!

TO HOLD THE *WATER* OUT!

KRUSH

THE LEVEL IS *DROPPING!* THE WATERS-- THEY'RE *RECEDING!*

THERE'S *AIR* TO BREATHE ONCE MORE!

AND-- NOT A MINUTE TOO *SOON!*

COULDN'T MAINTAIN MY *FORCE FIELD* ANY LONGER! THE *STRAIN* WAS TOO GREAT!

I'VE GOT TO *DROP* IT NOW-- EVEN THOUGH I'LL BE *UNPROTECTED!*

EVEN THOUGH-- HE'S COMING *TOWARDS* ME!

BUT-- WHAT DOES HE *WANT?* *WHY* DID HE CAPTURE ME?

WHY?

WHY?

WHY?

IF ONLY YOU'D *SPEAK!* IF ONLY YOU'D *SAY* SOMETHING!

WHAT DO YOU *WANT?* WHY DID YOU *BRING* ME HERE? I'VE GOT TO *KNOW!* *I'VE GOT TO KNOW!*

BACK AT THE HOSPITAL, IN A SILENT, DIMLY-LIT ROOM, SUE STORM'S HUSBAND FITFULLY TOSSES AND TURNS, UNTIL--

SUE--I'VE GOT TO GO TO HER!

SHE NEEDS ME! I KNOW IT! I FEEL IT!

WHEREVER SHE IS-- I'LL FIND HER! I MUST FIND HER!

I MUST!

BUT, AS THE DESPERATE ADVENTURER TRIES TO STAND --

MY LEGS-- THEY'RE LIKE RUBBER! WEAK-- I FEEL SO WEAK!

BUT I'VE GOT TO FIGHT IT-- GOT TO BE STRONG-- FOR SUE!

THAT'S IT! THAT'S IT! I MUST BE MASTER OF MY BODY-- NOT ITS SLAVE!

I CAN FEEL MY STRENGTH RETURNING, AND-- OH NO!

THEY MUSTN'T-- THEY CAN'T STOP ME AGAIN!

WE'D BETTER LOOK IN ON HIM NOW.

DOCTOR!

RICHARDS! COME BACK! YOU'RE STILL TOO WEAK-- YOU CAN'T--!

IT'S NO USE! HE WON'T LISTEN! ORDERLY-- DON'T LET HIM GET PAST YOU!

YOU HEARD THE DOC! GRAB 'IM!

HEY! LOOK WHAT'S COMIN'!

IT'S NOT *POSSIBLE!!* *NOTHIN'* CAN STRETCH LIKE THIS!

HOLD 'IM! *HOLD* 'IM! DON'T *LEGGO!*

I *WARN* YOU-- DON'T TRY TO *STOP* ME!

I CAN HANDLE *ANYTHING*-- FROM A BEDPAN TO A *WHEELCHAIR!*

BUT *THIS* IS OUTTA MY *LEAGUE!*

LOOK OUT!

THERE'S *NO* WAY! IT'LL TAKE MORE'N *US* TO PIN 'IM DOWN!

THWK

STAY *AWAY* FROM ME-- *EVERYONE!*

BUT I'VE *GOT* TO REACH MY *WIFE!*

I DON'T WANT ANYONE *HURT*--

BEN! JOHNNY! WHERE *ARE* YOU?

THERE'S NO *TRACE* OF THEM!

WHAT *HAPPENED?* WHERE DID THEY *GO?*

I--I CAN'T WAIT ANY *LONGER!*

THEY MUST HAVE-- GONE AFTER SUE-- THEMSELVES!

BUT I'VE GOT TO FIND THEM-- GOT TO HELP THEM!

I JUST NEED A FEW SECONDS--TO REST-- CATCH MY BREATH.

QUICK! UP HERE! HE'S ON THE ROOF!

MR. RICHARDS, LISTEN--YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING!

NO! NO! STAY AWAY!

WE'RE TRYING TO HELP YOU.

YOU NEED MORE SLEEP! YOU'RE STILL WEAK!

COME BACK TO YOUR ROOM.

MY WIFE'S LIFE IS IN DANGER--

-- AND YOU SPEAK TO ME OF SLEEP!

LOOK, THE POLICE ARE DOING ALL THEY CAN-- AS WELL AS YOUR OTHER TWO PARTNERS.

RICHARDS!

NOW LET ME HELP YOU--

I TOLD YOU-- STAY AWAY!

OH, MY GOD! WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

BY TRYING TO HELP HIM, WE'VE--WE'VE--

NO, DOC! HE'S OKAY! HE KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOIN'!

LOOK! LOOK OVER THE EDGE OF THE ROOF--

HE BILLOWED HIS BODY-- LIKE A SAIL!

NO ONE WILL STOP ME NOW!

HE'S FLOATING AWAY FROM US!

WHILE BACK AT THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE FABULOUS FF--

DIVIN' GEAR! WHAT IN BLAZES IS THAT FOR?

YOU GOT A BRAIN SOMEWHERE UNDER THAT THICK SKULL OF YOURS--

-- SO START USING IT, FELLA!

HE FINALLY LOST US SOMEWHERE NEAR THAT LAKE, DIDN'T HE?

AND THE LAST TIME WE FOUGHT HIM HE WAS MOSTLY AT HOME IN THE WATER!

BUT--IF HE GOT SUE UNDER THERE --HOW CAN SHE BREATHE?

THAT'S WHAT I'M SCARED TO THINK OF!

EVERY SECOND COUNTS! I'LL FLY TO THE LAKE! MEET ME THERE!

YEAH, JUNIOR! I'LL JUST DO THAT LITTLE THING!

ONCE I GIT THE POGO PLANE STARTED, I'LL REACH THE LAKE EVEN BEFORE-- HEY! WHAT GIVES?

AWW, NO! WE FERGOT TO FUEL 'ER UP! SHE'S EMPTY!

AND WE LEFT THE FURSHLUGGINER FANTASTI-CAR SITTIN' A COUPLE'A MILES AWAY FROM HERE!

WELL, THAT STILL AIN'T STOPPIN' THE BLUE-EYED THING! NOT NO HOW!

JOHNNY'S TWO-SEATER IS PARKED IN THE GARAGE IN THE BASEMENT--

BUT I AIN'T WAITIN' FER NO ELEVATOR!

NOT WHEN SUSIE MIGHT BE FIGHTIN' FER HER LIFE!

NUTS! THEY GOT IT SANDWICHED IN BY A DOZEN OTHER FLIVVERS!

IT'LL TAKE FEREVER TA JOCKEY IT PAST THEM OTHER HEAPS!

OUT

-- 'CEPTIN' IF I DO IT MY WAY!

HEY-- WAIT! HOLD IT! WHAT D'YA THINK YOU'RE DOING THERE?

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE I'M DOIN', BUSTER?

THAT CAR BELONGS TO JOHNNY STORM!

YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITHOUT A TICKET!

SHEESH! THAT'S ALL I NEED--A LOCKED DOOR!

RING BELL FOR ATTENDANT

SKRAAK

SEE THIS? WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE TO YA?

B-BEST T-TICKET I EVER DID S-SEE!

HEY! WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING, MEATHEAD!

MEATHEAD? IF I WUZN'T IN A HURRY--!

AND, JUST ABOVE THE TEEMING STREETS--

CAN'T STAY ALOFT MUCH LONGER! IF ONLY--

WAIT! THERE-- AHEAD OF ME-- A STREAK OF FLAME IN THE SKY!

I'M IN LUCK! IT'S THE TORCH!

AND THE SPEEDING CAR *BELOW* HIM-- ONLY *BEN* COULD DRIVE LIKE THAT!

IT MEANS THEY'RE *ONTO* SOMETHING-- THEY'RE RACING TOWARDS *SUE!*

SECONDS LATER...

IZZAT THE *SPOT?*

YES! NOW, AS SOON AS I GET INTO THIS *DIVING* GEAR--

IF SHE'S *DOWN* THERE, WHAT *CHANCE'LL* SHE HAVE?

WE CAN'T AFFORD TO *THINK* OF THAT!

WELL, I DON'T *NEED* NO GEAR, SO--

HOLD IT!

HUH? WHO'S *THAT?*

IT'S *REED!*

SOME GUYS SURE KNOW HOWTA MAKE AN *ENTRANCE!*

STAY *BACK-- BOTH* OF YOU!

SHE'S *MY* WIFE! *I'VE* GOT TO GO TO HER! *I'VE* GOT TO SAVE HER!

WHOA, STRETCHO! YER *FERGETTIN'* SOMETHING--

HOW D'YA EXPECT TA *BREATHE* DOWN THERE?

BEN-- STOP HIM! HE'S *DELIRIOUS!*

WE'RE STILL A *TEAM*, AIN'T WE?

YA ALWAYS SAID WE GOTTA *ACT* LIKE A TEAM!

NO! *NO!* SHE *NEEDS* ME!

SURE SHE NEEDS YA, PARTNER, BUT--

HEY! LOOK *OUT!* YER *HEAD--!*

THOP

HE KNOCKED HIMSELF *OUT* AGAINST MY *HAND!*

BUT HE AIN'T *HURT!* MEBBE IT'S *BETTER* THIS WAY!

THE REST'LL CLEAR HIS *HEAD--* WHILE TORCHY 'N ME GO *BELOW!*

AWRIGHT, JUNIOR-- *DROP ANCHOR!*

WE GOT *THINGS* TA DO!

WHILE, IN AN AIR-FILLED CAVE, FAR BELOW THE SURFACE--

IF ONLY HE COULD *SPEAK!* IF ONLY I KNEW WHAT HE *WANTS!*

HIS ACTIONS ARE SO *DESPERATE--* SO *URGENT--* BUT *WHY?*

WHERE IS HE *TAKING* ME?

A *SHIP!* THE SAME ONE HE HAD USED THE *LAST* TIME!

BUT *WHY?* WHY IS HE *BRINGING* ME HERE?

WHAT IF--HE'S TAKING ME *PRISONER--* TO WHATEVER DISTANT WORLD HE'S *FROM?*

NOW HE--HE'S *LEAVING!* I DON'T *UNDERSTAND!* HE BROUGHT ME TO HIS SHIP--AND HE'S GOING *AWAY!*

BUT THAT *LOOK* ON HIS FACE--AS IF HE'S *BEGGING* ME--TO *WAIT* HERE--TO *TRUST* HIM!

THE *MONSTER!* I'VE *FOUND* HIM!

BUT, WHERE'S *SUE?* WHAT'S HE *DONE* WITH HER?

WE'VE *GOT* YOU NOW! AND--IF YOU'VE HARMED MY *SISTER--!*

=*UHHH!*= I--I'D ALMOST *FORGOTTEN*--HOW *STRONG* HE IS!

THERE'S *NO* WAY TO HANDLE HIM--HERE UNDER THE *WATER!*

HAVE TO FIGURE OUT--HOW TO FORCE HIM TO THE *SURFACE!*

AND I THINK I'VE GOT THE *ANSWER!*

EVEN THOUGH I CAN'T *FLAME ON* WHEN MY BODY'S *WET*--

I CAN STILL GENERATE ENOUGH NATURAL *HEAT* TO BRING THE WATER TO A *BOIL!*

AND THAT'S *JUST* WHAT I'M GONNA *DO!*

IT'S *WORKING!* I'VE MADE IT TOO *HOT*--TOO *UNBEARABLE* FOR HIM! HE'S HEADING FOR THE *SURFACE!*

HOW *ABOUT* THAT! I *FIGGERED* THE KID WOULD TURN THE TRICK!

BEN! BE *CAREFUL!* HE'S STRONGER THAN *EVER!*

OKAY! OKAY! I AIN'T NO PINK-CHEEKED *PANTY-WAIST* MYSELF!

HEY! HE'S *UPROOTIN'* THAT WHOLE BLAMED *TREE*-- JUST BY *LEANIN'* ON IT!

NOW IT'S UP TA BASHFUL *BENJY!*

BEN! LOOK OUT! HE'S SWINGING IT AT YOU! HE'S-- BEN!

KRAK

I DON'T MIND A GUY TAKIN' A WHACK AT ME LIKE THAT--

BUT ANY CREEP WHAT AIN'T GOT NO RESPECT FER ECOLOGY--!

STAY AWAY FROM HIM A FEW SECONDS LONGER--

--TILL I DRY OFF-- TILL I CAN HELP YOU!

LOOK, HALF-PINT-- WHEN I NEED ME A NURSE-MAID I'LL LETCHA KNOW!

BUT WHILE YER WAITIN' GIT A LOAD'A THIS--

WHOKK

THAT'LL SHOW 'IM HE AIN'T MESSIN' AROUND WITH NO AMACHOORS!

NOW THERE'S JUST ONE THING WE WANNA KNOW-- BEFORE I REALLY LETCHA HAVE IT--

WHAT HAPPENED TA SUE??

IN PLACE OF AN ANSWER, THE SILENT STRANGER FROM THE STARS GRASPS THE BASE OF A NEARBY BRIDGE--

--ACTUALLY LIFTING THE SOLID STONE STRUCTURE--WITH HIS BARE HANDS!

OH NO YA DON'T!

WATCH IT, BEN! I'LL STOP HIM!

I CAN FLAME ON AGAIN!

SHIST

THE FIRE HAS HIM CONFUSED! HE PUT THE BRIDGE BACK!

STAY UP THERE, MATCHHEAD!

THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TA DEAL WIT' A PUNK LIKE THIS--

--AND THAT'S TA LET 'IM KNOW--

IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!

TORCH! FLAME OFF!

BEN! GET AWAY FROM HIM! LISTEN TO ME!

MY HEAD IS CLEAR AGAIN! I KNOW WHAT THE SCORE IS!

WE'VE BEEN WRONG! WE MUSTN'T FIGHT HIM! HE NEEDS HELP!

SHEESH! I LIKED IT BETTER WHEN YA WUZ UNCONSCIOUS

REED! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING! HE'S STILL GOT SUE!

GIT BACK TA THE HOSPITAL, PAL! LET US HANDLE THIS!

NO! THERE ISN'T TIME TO EXPLAIN!

LOOK--I'LL HELP YOU! I KNOW WHAT'S WRONG! YOU MUST TRUST ME!

WATCH IT! DON'T GIT SO CLOSE TO 'IM!

THERE'S NOTHING TO FEAR, BEN! HE MEANS US NO HARM!

GO BACK TO YOUR SHIP! BRING IT TO THE SURFACE! WE'LL WAIT FOR YOU.

MINUTES LATER--

HE'S DOIN' WHATCHA TOLD 'IM!

YES! I KNEW HE WOULD.

BUT, REED--WHAT ABOUT SUE?

HOW--HOW CAN YOU BE SURE THAT--?

SHE'S ALL RIGHT! HE SENSES WHAT WE'RE SAYING--HE'LL BRING HER TO US.

ONCE AGAIN, THE STRANGELY SILENT ALIEN TURNS BACK TO HIS SHIP, AND--WHEN HE RE-EMERGES--

IT'S SUE! SHE'S SMILING! SHE'S OKAY!

AS I LAY SEMI-CONSCIOUS, ALL THE PIECES SUDDENLY FELL INTO *PLACE* IN MY MIND!

HE HAD VISITED OUR PLANET ONCE *BEFORE*--AND CAME IN *PEACE!* WHY SHOULD HE MEAN US *HARM* ON HIS RETURN?

NO! HE HAD COME BACK FOR *ANOTHER* REASON--

IF I HADN'T BEEN SO *WEAK*-- SO *ILL*--I'D HAVE REALIZED IT *SOONER!*

HE--AND HIS *MATE*--ARE FROM ANOTHER *WORLD!* WHY WOULD HE *RETURN*--AND STEAL *DRUGS* FROM A HOSPITAL?

BECAUSE, WHEN THEY WERE LAST HERE, AN *EARTH VIRUS* HAD INFECTED HER--AND ONLY AN *EARTH MEDICATION* COULD *CURE* HER!

THE REASON THEY NEEDED *ME*-- OR *ANY* HUMAN BEING--WAS TO *HELP* THEM--TO ADMINISTER THE MEDICINE--

WHICH, OF COURSE, I *DID!*

HE WAS HELPLESS, SCARED, DIDN'T KNOW WHERE TO *TURN!* EVERY HAND WAS LIFTED *AGAINST* HIM...

IT MUST BE *HORRIBLE* TO BE *FEARED*--TO BE *ATTACKED*--JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE *DIFFERENT*-- JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE A *STRANGER*, IN A STRANGE *WORLD!*

I SHOULD'A *THOUGHT* OF THAT! I'M *ONE* GUY WHO OUGHTTA *KNOW* HOW IT ALL FEELS TA BE *DIFFERENT!*

YOU DON'T *HAVE* TO BE A STRANGER, IN A STRANGE *WORLD*, TO BE DIFFERENT, BEN.

EVERYONE IS DIFFERENT FROM EVERYONE ELSE-- IN *SOME* WAY OR OTHER.

YES, DARLING! *ALL* OF US ARE STRANGERS-- IN THE ENDLESS *UNIVERSE!*

IT'S OUR *DIFFERENCES* THAT MAKE US *BROTHERS*--AS MUCH AS OUR *KINSHIP!*

IF ONLY WE COULD *REMEMBER* THAT--ALWAYS!

NEXT *A NEW BEGINNING!*

FANTASTIC FOUR
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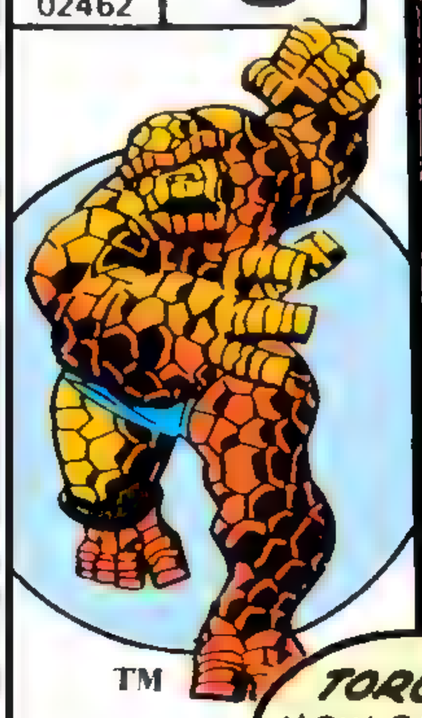
AN ALL-NEW ORIGIN EPIC!



TORCH! HOW CAN WE STOP THIS MONSTER? HOW?

WAIT AND SEE, SIS!

THE FANTASTIC FOUR HAVE ONLY BEGUN TO FIGHT!

YOU KIDS CAN'T DO IT ALONE!

IT'S TIME FOR THE THING TO LEND A HAND!

NOT WITHOUT MR. FANTASTIC, YOU DON'T!

TOGETHER AGAIN FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE FABULOUS F.F. BATTLE--

THE CREATURE FROM THE EARTH'S CORE!

THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

STAN LEE PRESENTS: * ROY THOMAS, WRITER, EDITOR * JOHN BUSCEMA, ARTIST * JOE SINNOTT, INKER JOHN COSTANZA, LETTERER

THE WAY IT BEGAN!

NIGHTMARE: (n) A TERRIFYING DREAM, IN WHICH THE DREAMER EXPERIENCES STARK FEELINGS OF HELPLESSNESS, SORROW, OR SHOCK!

NIGHTMARE: WHAT BENJAMIN J. GRIMM ENTERS AS HE OPENS AN UNASSUMING-LOOKING DOOR SOMEWHERE IN THE BAXTER BUILDING, ONLY TO SEE--

SUZIE!

--MURDERED BY DOCTOR DOOM!

BASED IN PART ON THAT CLASSIC FIRST ISSUE OF THE F.F. BY STAN LEE and JACK KIRBY

BEN, MY DARLING-- WHAT IS IT?

WHAT'S WRONG?

BELIEVE ME, ALICIA BABY-- YOU DON'T WANNA KNOW!

YOU JUST SKEDADDLE OUTTA HERE-- FAST--'CAUSE I GOT ME SOME BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF!

--THOUGH IT AIN'T GONNA HELP MUCH!

TURN AROUND, DOOM!

I WANT YA TA SEE WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN TO YA!

I DUNNO HOW YOU GOT IN HERE--OR WHY YA DID THAT TO SUZIE--

BUT, WHEN BROTHER BENJY GETS THRU WITH YA, YOU'LL-- YEEEEOWWW!

IT--IT AIN'T POSSIBLE!

I WENT RIGHT THRU 'IM!!

RA-SKK!

CRIPES! NOW DOC DOOM'S FADIN' AWAY-- LIKE A BAD TV PICTURE--

I THOUGHT YOU'D ALREADY HAVE GUESSED BY NOW, BEN...!

AN' SUE'S ALREADY LONG GONE! WHAT IN BLAZES--?

WHA--? WHO--?

NOW YOU *REALLY* DISAPPOINT ME, OLD FRIEND.

I COULD *UNDERSTAND* YOUR FORGET-TING *DOCTOR DOOM*...

BUT I SHOULDN'T THINK YOU'D *EVER* FORGET...

...YOUR ERSTWHILE *COLLEGE ROOMMATE!*

REED!

WHAT'S *WITH* YOU, STRETCHO?

IF YER GONNA PICK UP A *SICK SENSAHUMOR* AT *THIS* LATE DATE--

THAT WAS *NO* JOKE, BEN.

YOU ACCIDENTALLY INTERRUPTED A VERY *SERIOUS* SCIENTIFIC EXPERIMENT.

WHAT *KIND?*

YOU TRYIN' TO SEE WHAT IT TAKES TO *SCARE* ME TA DEATH?

HARDLY!

THIS IS THE NEW, IMPROVED VERSION OF MY *THOUGHT-PROJECTOR HELMET.* *

I HAD TO *TEST* ITS POWER--BY CONCEN-TRATING ON THE MOST *REPULSIVE* SCENE I COULD *IMAGINE.*

SO YOU THOUGHT OF DOC DOOM KILLIN' *SUZIE,* HUH?

WELL--I GUESS THAT'S GOT *AIR POLLUTION* BEAT, ALRIGHT!

* FOR THE OLD, *UN*IMPROVED VERSION, SEE F.F. #27. --ROY.

REED! BEN! WHAT'S THE *BUZZ,* ANYHOW?

I HEARD *SHOUTING* IN HERE--THEN A *CRASH,* SO--

--SO NATURALLY YOU COULDN'T HAVE TAKEN THE *LONG* WAY AROUND.

I HADN'T HAD THAT SECTION OF PANELING *FIREPROOFED* YET!

YA DON'T *SAY!*

UH OH! HERE COMES YER *REAL* BETTER-HALF, STRETCHO--AN' IT LOOKS LIKE SHE'S ON THE *WAR-PATH!*

JOHNNY STORM!!
YOU FLAME OFF AND COME DOWN HERE-- THIS MINUTE!
IF I WERE YOU, KID, I'D LISTEN TO THE LADY.
I'M NOT YOU, REED... BUT HERE I COME.
AND IT'S ABOUT TIME, TOO!
DON'T YOU REALIZE THAT REED IS STILL RECOVERING FROM A SEVERE CASE OF EXHAUSTION, WITHOUT YOUR STIRRING THINGS UP?
BUT, SIS--I WAS ONLY--
AND DON'T YOU TALK BACK TO ME!
YOU TELL 'IM, BOSS-LADY.
NOW BE FAIR, HONEY--JOHNNY DIDN'T MEAN ANYTHING, AFTER ALL.
HE JUST THOUGHT SOMEONE WAS IN DANGER, AND HE WAS EAGER TO HELP, SO--
NOW WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT??
BECAUSE IT'S ALREADY ONE P.M., MISTER REED RICHARDS..
AND, THOUGH IT MAY NOT MEAN MUCH TO YOU, WE'RE DUE TO VISIT OUR SON AT WHISPER HILL--RIGHT NOW.
OUR--? OH NO! I FORGOT!
ALICIA, BABY... ABOUT OUR GETTIN' MARRIED AN' ALL...
I BEEN THINKIN' MAYBE WE SHOULD GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER A LITTLE BETTER FIRST...
IF ALICIA'S GOT HALF THE SMARTS I THINK SHE DOES, GRANITE-PUSS, SHE'LL BE THE ONE WHO'LL DO THE WAITING...
LIKE, FOR ABOUT A HUNDRED YEARS!
WHY YOU WET-NOSED WALKIN' WIENIE-ROAST--
WAIT'LL I DITCH MY STOGIE, AN' I'LL--
NO NEED TO WAIT, BIG BOY.
I'LL GET RID OF IT FOR YOU!
FRAP!
YEEOW!

THAT AIN'T *CUTE*, BUDDY-BOY-- AN' *NEITHER* IS WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN TO *YOU!*

JOHNNY--BEN-- *CUT IT OUT!*

TELL *HIM* TO QUIT, LEADER-MAN!

NO, ON *SECOND* THOUGHT, I'LL TELL HIM *MYSELF*--

--LIKE THIS!

HEY! WHAT THE DEVIL--?

FJMP!

LOOK OUT, STRETCHO! WE'RE GONNA--

SKARP!

ARRRHH

NO! DON'T--! STOP IT, BOTH OF YOU!

YOU'LL *KILL* HIM!

YOU'LL *KILL REED!*

IS THAT WHAT YOU TWO *WANT?*

ARE YOU *TRYING* TO MURDER THE FINEST MAN WHO EVER *LIVED?*

SUE--WE DIDN'T *MEAN*--

WE JUST GOT *CARRIED AWAY--!*

DON'T... BLAME *THEM*, SUE...

WE'VE... *ALL* BEEN... UNDER SUCH A *STRAIN* LATELY...

FIRST, THE THREAT OF *GALACTUS*-- THEN, THE BATTLE WITH THE MONSTER FROM THE *LOST LAGOON*...

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO *SAY*, DARLING?

JUST *THIS*...

...THAT MAYBE IT'S TIME... WE *ALL* HAD A VACATION... FROM *EACH OTHER*, FOR A WHILE.

C'MON, HONEY... WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT SOME MORE... ON THE WAY TO *WHISPER HILL.*

OF *COURSE*, REED, DARLING... JUST LEAN ON *ME...!*

SHEESH! DIDJA SEE ALL THAT MUSH STUFF, ALICIA?

OOPS! I COULD CUT MY TONGUE OUT, BABY. I SHOULDN'TA SAID "SEE"!

IT'S JUST THAT--WELL, YOU GET AROUND SO GOOD AN' ALL, SOMETIMES I ALMOST FERGIT THAT YER--

BLIND? I...WISH I COULD.

BUT, YOU MUSTN'T FEEL SORRY FOR ME...

YEAH. C'MON, I'LL WALK YA HOME.

HEY, COME BACK, LADY! IF IT'S ANY-THING I SAID--

DON'T BE SILLY, BEN DEAR.

IT'S JUST THAT ...ONCE IN A WHILE, A GIRL WANTS TO BE... ALONE.

I'LL LET MYSELF OUT...!

NUTS!*

NOW WHAT'S WRONG, GRUE-SOME?

*BASHFUL BENJY'S PRECISE COMMENT AVAILABLE ON REQUEST; SENT IN PLAIN BROWN WRAPPER. --ROY.

YOOOOO

JUST THIS, SONNY!

OKAY! SO WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?

JUST A LITTLE DEMONSTRATION, KIDDO.

I'M THE THING, AIN'T I? BIGGEST, STRONGEST BOZO THIS SIDE 'A THE HULK, RIGHT?

BUT WHAT GOOD'S IT DO ME-- IF I CAN'T MAKE ALICIA SEE AGAIN?

AWW--WHY AM I WASTIN' MY BREATH TALKIN' TO YOU?

WHAT DO I--? WELL NOW, THAT REALLY TEARS IT!

WHAT'S A BRAT LIKE YOU KNOW ABOUT LOVE, ANYHOW?

WHILE YOU'RE WALLOWING IN SELF-PITY--

--YOU MIGHT RECALL THAT I HAPPEN TO BE IN LOVE WITH A GAL NAMED CRYSTAL--

--WHO CAN'T EVER LEAVE THE GREAT REFUGE TO MARRY ME-- WITHOUT RISKING HER VERY LIFE!

SO GO SEND 'ER A CANDYGRAM!

MAYBE I'LL DO BETTER THAN THAT, BIG MAN.

MAYBE I'LL GO FIND HER--AND FORGET THIS WHOLE RAT RACE!

HEY!

WAIT...

JOHNNY!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING, SON?
SOMEPLACE WHERE I'M TREATED LIKE A MAN-- NOT JUST A KID WITH AN ALL-OVER HOTFOOT!
AND DON'T CALL ME SON!
SUE... THIS MAY SEEM A BIT SUPERFLUOUS, IN LIGHT OF THAT LITTLE SCENE... BUT I'M WORRIED ABOUT YOUR BROTHER.
EVER SINCE CRYSTAL HAD TO RETURN TO THE HIDDEN LAND, HE HASN'T BEEN HIM-SELF.
BUT--WHAT IF HE HAS, REED?
WHAT IF THAT BLAZING, HOSTILE MAN --IS THE REAL JOHNNY STORM?
THEN PRAY, HONEY--FOR US, AND FOR THE WORLD!
SOME SWINGIN' SUPERHERO I AM!
THE CLOSEST THING I GOT TO A FRIEND IN THE WORLD OUTSIDE 'A REED...
...AN I GOTTA SHOOT OFF MY MOUTH AN' SEND 'IM PACKIN'!
STILL, LONG AS I'M ALONE AN' ALL...
MAYBE I NEED ME A LITTLE DISTRACTION...
LIKE THIS THOUGHT-PROJECTOR GIZMO OF REED'S!
HEY, WADDAYA KNOW! IT FITS!
REED MUST BE MORE SWELL-HEADED THAN I THOUGHT.
LESSEE NOW... OL' BIG-WORDS DOUSED THE LIGHTS FIRST...
THEN, JUST TO TEST IT OUT, HE THOUGHT 'A THE MOST REPULSIVE THING HE COULD.
GUESS I MIGHT AS WELL DO THE SAME.
ONLY CATCH IS, THE MOST REVOLTIN' THING I CAN THINK OF--
--IS ME!

HEY! THAT AIN'T ME-- OR IS IT?

SURE! THAT'S HOW- I LOOKED WHEN I FIRST TURNED INTO THE THING-- WAY BACK WHEN!

AN' HERE I AM IN ALL MY EVER-LOVIN', BLUE-EYED GLORY TODAY! MAYBE I AIN'T AS LUMPY...

BUT I'M STILL... JUST A THING!

OH WOW! I'M SURE DOIN' A BANG-UP JOB OF CHEERIN' MYSELF UP!

WELL, LET'S SEE WHAT ELSE I CAN CONJURE UP...

WH--? THAT'S ME, TOO! THE BEN GRIMM I USETA BE, BEFORE--

YEAH. BEFORE.

FUNNY--I KNOW IT AIN'T GONNA TAKE MY MIND OFF MY TROUBLES-- OR OFF ALICIA'S BEIN' BLIND--

BUT I GOT THIS SUDDEN URGE TO SEE THE WAY IT WAS--

THE WAY THE SO-CALLED FANTASTIC FOUR GOT ITS START!

MAYBE THAT'LL HELP ME FIGGER OUT WHERE IT ALL WENT WRONG...

"LESSEE NOW... FIRST THING I CAN REMEMBER IS AN EVENIN' SEVERAL YEARS BACK! THE FOUR OF US WUZ TOGETHER EVEN THEN. YEAH--I CAN SEE IT! I CAN SEE IT PLAIN AS DAY--!

THEN, YOU WANT NO PART OF MY PLAN, BEN?

WHAT PLAN? SOME HAREBRAINED SCHEME TO BEAT THE REST'A THE WORLD INTO SPACE?

COUNT ME OUT!

YOU KNOW BETTER'N I DO, THE SHIELDS ON THAT SHIP YOU HELPED BUILD AIN'T ENOUGH TO KEEP OUT COSMIC RAYS! WE'D JUST GET OURSELVES KILLED!

YOU WANNA BE THE BIG MAN? YOU PILOT THE SHIP!!

"YEAH, THAT'S HOW IT WAS, ALRIGHT! ONLY IT WAS DIFFERENT, SOMEHOW... I KNOW IT WAS, ONLY I CAN'T--

"SURE, NOW I KNOW WHAT IT IS! I AIN'T REALLY SEEIN' EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED -- JUST WHAT I REMEMBER AS HAPPENIN'! THAT'S WHY EVERY-BODY LOOKS -- ACTS -- TALKS LIKE THEY DO TODAY -- EVEN SWEET SUE --.'

BEN -- YOU KNOW WE'VE GOT TO TAKE THE CHANCE!

DO YOU WANT SOME FOREIGN POWER TO BEAT AMERICA TO THE MOON?

LET 'EM! IT'LL GIVE US A HEAD START CLEANIN' UP HARLEM AN' WATTS.

"HUH? DID I SAY THAT?"

I NEVER THOUGHT YOU WOULD TURN OUT TO BE A COWARD, BEN GRIMM!

"YOU TELL 'IM, SUZIE! I MEAN -- YOU TELL ME! AN' YOU DID!

NOBODY CALLS ME A COWARD!

SHOW ME THAT SHIP! I'LL FLY 'ER -- NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS!

WHOM!

"IT ALL SEEMS LIKE A MILLIONS YEARS AGO -- BUT I CAN STILL REMEMBER THAT WILD RIDE UPSTATE -- TO THAT SECRET BASE IN THE FOOT-HILLS --

"-- THE BASE THE PENTAGON DIDN'T EVEN TELL THE BOYS AT CAPE CANAVER-AL ABOUT!

SUSAN -- BEN AND I KNOW WHAT WE'RE DOING. BUT, YOU AND JOHNNY --

I'M YOUR FIANCEE, REED! WHERE YOU GO -- I GO!

AND I'M TAGGIN' ALONG WITH SIS -- SO IT'S SETTLED!

"MEBBE IF WE'D HAD TO WAIT FER OFFICIAL CLEARANCE, WE MIGHT 'A SOBERED UP, AND THE WHOLE THING NEVER WOULD 'A HAPPENED...

"BUT, REED'S I.D. GOT US PAST THE GATE -- AN' THE GUARDS --

"AFTER ALL, NOBODY FIGURED THAT THE GUY WHO'D DESIGNED THE SO-CALLED 'POCKET ROCKET' --

"-- WOULD BE THE ONE WHO'D HIJACK IT!!

WHOOOOM!

I ALWAYS SAID YOU WERE THE BEST TEST-PILOT IN THE WORLD, OLD FRIEND.

YEAH -- UNTIL WE HIT THE COSMIC RAYS!

THE SHIP'S HANDLING LIKE A BABY. EVERYTHING IS A-OK.

NOBODY KNOWS WHAT'LL HAPPEN THEN -- NOT EVEN YOU!

"YEAH, I **KNOW** NOBOBY READ ABOUT OUR FLIGHT IN THE **PAPERS**-- 'CAUSE, **OFFICIALLY**, THAT BASE UPSTATE DIDN'T EVEN **EXIST**--BUT WE **BLASTED OFF**, JUST THE SAME--

"WE **DID IT!** WE WERE **FIRST** IN OUTER SPACE!

"BIG HAIRY **DEAL!**

"THEN, SUDDENLY, IT **STARTED**--LIKE A THOUSAND ANGRY **WOODPECKERS** BEATIN' ON AN OLD **BARN DOOR**--

HEAR **THAT**, TEST-TUBE JOCKEY?

IT'S THE **COSMIC RAYS!** I **WARNED** YOU ABOUT 'EM--AN' **HERE THEY COME!**

"I'D **WARNED** REED, ALRIGHT--ONLY THING IS, I DIDN'T REALLY KNOW **WHAT** I WUZ WARNIN' HIM **ABOUT**--

"BUT, RIGHT THEN AN' THERE--I **LEARNED!**

THEY'RE **PENETRATING** THE SHIP--AS IF IT WEREN'T EVEN **THERE!**

BUT--I DON'T **FEEL** ANYTHING.

NATURALLY, SUE--THEY'RE ONLY **RAYS OF LIGHT!** BUT THEY'LL **AFFECT** US JUST THE SAME.

I ONLY WISH I KNEW --**HOW**

MY **HEAD!** IT'S POUNDING-- LIKE IT'S READY TO **BUST!**

YOU WERE **RIGHT**, BEN! WE SHOULD HAVE WAITED-- GOTTEN **HEAVIER SHIELDING!**

NOW YA TELL ME!

JOHNNY-- WHAT'S **WRONG?** WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOU?

I-I DON'T **KNOW**, SIS!

MY BODY FEELS **HOT** --LIKE IT'S ON **FIRE!**

LIKE I WAS **BURNING UP!**

HEY! LISTEN TO **ME**--!

SOMEBODY **ELSE** TAKE THE CONTROLS-- I CAN'T **CUT** IT ANY MORE!

MY **ARMS**--MY WHOLE **BODY**-- TOO **HEAVY**-- CAN'T **MOVE!**

GOTTA **LIE DOWN**-- JUST FOR-- A **LITTLE** WHILE--!

"LUCKY FOR US OL' REED HAD FIXED THE SHIP UP WITH AN AUTOMATIC PILOT...

"...'CAUSE WHEN WE CAME BACK DOWN AGAIN...

"...WE DIDN'T EXACTLY MAKE A THREE-POINT LANDING..!

"LEASTWAYS NOBODY WAS HURT, THOUGH-- AT LEAST, NOT SO'S IT SHOWED RIGHT AWAY...

YOU MEAN-- WE'RE ALL ALIVE?

IT WAS CLOSE, JOHNNY-- BUT, WE MADE IT!

BUT, REED--AFTER ALL YOUR WORK, YOUR DEDICATION-- WE FAILED!

WHAT'D YOU EXPECT, LADY?

"SHEESH!" I WUZ A REAL CHARMER BACK THEN--NO TWO WAYS ABOUT IT!

BUT, WE'RE STILL NOT OUT OF THE WOODS.

WE STILL HAVE TO SEE WHETHER THOSE COSMIC RAYS AFFECTED US IN ANY WAY.

OH, REED, I-I THINK THEY DID.

I SUDDENLY FEEL-- SO STRANGE..!

SUSAN!

LOOK AT SUE!

WH-WHAT'S WRONG?!

YOU'RE-- FADING AWAY!

OH NO! NO!

IT--ISN'T POSSIBLE!

SOMEHOW, THE COSMIC RAYS MUST HAVE ALTERED YOUR ATOMIC STRUCTURE--

--MAKING YOU BECOME-- INVISIBLE!

SIS! I CAN'T SEE YOU AT ALL ANYMORE!

H-HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

THERE'S NO WAY OF KNOWING, SUE! NO WAY!

THERE'S GOTTA BE! WHAT IF SHE NEVER GETS VISIBLE AGAIN?

WAIT! NOW I SEE HER!

I'M-- MYSELF AGAIN!

IT HAPPENED SO SUDDENLY-- ALL BY ITSELF--!

THANK HEAVEN YOU'RE *ALL RIGHT* AGAIN, MY DARLING!

"*ALL RIGHT*"?

HOW DO YOU *KNOW*, WISE GUY? SHE MIGHT TURN INVISIBLE AGAIN AT ANY *SECOND*.

HOW DO YOU KNOW *ANY* OF US IS "*ALL RIGHT*"?

BEN--I'M SICK AND TIRED OF YOUR *INSULTS*, YOUR *COMPLAINING*!

AN' *I'M* SICK OF *YOU*, PERIOD!

I DIDN'T *PURPOSELY* CAUSE OUR FLIGHT TO FAIL...

IN FACT, I'M GONNA *PASTE* YOU ONE--

--RIGHT IN THAT SMUG *KISSER* OF YOURS!

BEN-- *STOP*!

LOOK WHAT'S *HAPPENING* TO YOU-- YOU'RE *CHANGING*!

THIS IS *ONE* TIME YOU DON'T TALK YOUR WAY *OUT* OF IT, MISTER!

I'M GONNA *MOP UP* THE PLACE WITH YOU--

AN' I MEAN *NOW*!

"*IT AIN'T PLEASANT REMEMBERIN' HOW I WUZ THEN--MR. BAD TEMPER OF 1961--*

"*BUT, I STARTED THIS SCENE--AN' I GOTTA SEE IT THRU!*"

REED, DARLING--*RUN*! BEN'S TURNED INTO SOME SORT OF--*THING*! HE'S STRONG AS AN *OX*!

"*REED, DARLING --BULL!*"

HOW CAN YOU CARE FOR *THAT* WEAKLING, BABY, WHEN *I'M* HERE?

I'LL *PROVE* TO YA THAT YER IN LOVE WITH THE *WRONG GUY*, SUZIE! I'LL--

HEY!

OH *NO* YOU DON'T!

YOU'VE HAD THIS COMING TO YOU A *LONG TIME*, BEN--

AND *NOW* YOU'RE GOING TO--

WH-WHAT AM I *DOING*? WHAT'S *HAPPENED* TO ME?

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO ALL OF US??

YOU TELL *ME*-- THEN WE'LL *BOTH* KNOW.

YOU'VE TURNED INTO *MONSTERS*-- BOTH OF YOU!

AND NOW-- *SOMETHING'S* HAPPENING TO *ME*, TOO!!

IT'S THOSE RAYS--THOSE *COSMIC RAYS!*

NOW I KNOW-- WHY I'VE BEEN FEELING SO *WARM.*

LOOK AT ME! ALL I DID--WAS GET *EXCITED*--

--AND MY WHOLE *BODY'S* STARTING TO *CATCH FIRE!*

I'M LIKE THAT OLDTIME *COMIC-BOOK* HERO-- THE *HUMAN TORCH!*

I'M *LIGHTER THAN AIR!*

I CAN EVEN-- *FLY!*

"*BY THE TIME JOHNNY'D FIGURED OUT HOW TO CONTROL HIS FLAME-POWER ENOUGH TO LAND, HE COULD SAY WHAT ALL OF US WUZ THINKIN'--!*

WE'VE *CHANGED* SOMEHOW.

WE'RE-- *MORE THAN JUST HUMAN!*

YEAH... OR MAYBE *LESS.*

"*BUT IT WAS REED, NATCH, WHO TOOK CHARGE-- JUST LIKE HE COULD SEE THE FUTURE, SOMEHOW --SEE WHAT WE WERE, AN' WHAT WE WERE GONNA BECOME--!*

LISTEN TO ME, ALL OF YOU!

THAT MEANS *YOU TOO,* BEN.

NO NEED TO MAKE A *SPEECH,* BIG SHOT.

WE HAVE *POWERS* NOW, LIKE JOHNNY SAID-- *SUPER-HUMAN* POWERS.

WE CAN ALL READ YA LIKE A *BOOK!*

MORE POWER THAN *ANYONE* HAS EVER POSSESSED *BEFORE!*

YOU GONNA TELL US WE GOTTA *USE* THAT POWER TO *HELP HUMANITY* OR SOMETHIN', *AIN'T* YA?

I MIGHT HAVE *PHRASED* IT DIFFERENTLY, OLD FRIEND... BUT YOU'RE *RIGHT.*

WE'LL NEED *CODE NAMES* AT FIRST... WHEN WE TELL THE *GOVERNMENT* WHAT HAPPENED.

IMMODEST AS IT MAY SOUND, MINE WILL BE... *MR. FANTASTIC.*

I'VE ALREADY NAMED MYSELF THE *HUMAN TORCH*-- AND I'M WITH YOU ALL THE *WAY,* REED.

THE SAME GOES FOR-- THE *INVISIBLE GIRL!*

ONE HAND IS STILL *MISSING.*

BEN!?

I *AIN'T* BEN GRIMM ANYMORE. I'M WHAT *SUZIE* CALLED ME-- *THE THING!*

BUT I'LL TRY TO PUT UP WITH THE REST 'A *YOU*--AS LONG AS YOU CAN STAND *ME!*

"*AND, AS IT TURNS OUT, THAT WAS A LOT LONGER 'N I EVER WOULD 'A SUSPECTED--!*

"THE REST LIKE THEY SAY, IS HISTORY..

"...ANCIENT HISTORY.

..."'CAUSE, THAT WAS THE DAY WHEN THE FANTASTIC FOUR WUZ BORN...!

"AN' FROM THAT TIME ON, NUTHIN' WAS EVER GONNA BE QUITE THE SAME AGAIN...

"YEAH... ESPECIALLY US!

NUTS! I'VE DONE ENOUGH RE-HASHIN' TO LAST ME A LIFETIME...

BUT NONE 'A THIS IS HELPING ALICIA ANY...OR ME, EITHER.

S'FUNNY THOUGH, ABOUT THE VERY FIRST DO-BADDER THE F.F. TANGLED WITH...

...NONE OTHER THAN THE MOLE MAN!

HE WAS BLIND, TOO-- BUT THAT DIDN'T STOP 'IM FROM NEARLY TOTALIN' US OUR FIRST TIME AT BAT...

...EVEN IF HE WUZ A SAWED-OFF SHRIMP IN LEFTOVER 3-D GOGGLES.

I CAN SEE IT LIKE IT WUZ YESTERDAY--THAT BIG CREEPY CHAMBER UNDERNEATH MONSTER ISLAND..

"ACTUALLY, IT WUZ REED AND THE TORCH WHO RAN INTO HIM FIRST..SO THEY HADDA LISTEN UP CLOSE TO ALL HIS RANTIN' AND RAVIN'...

"BUT, NONE OF 'EM KNEW I'D STUMBLED ONTO THE SCENE, TOO--JUST IN TIME FOR--

SO YOU HAVE NEVER BEFORE HEARD OF THE MOLE MAN, EH?

SHOULD WE HAVE?

NO MATTER. NO MATTER AT ALL.

SOON, THE WORLD SHALL HEAR OF ME-- WHEN I HAVE THE ENTIRE PLANET IN MY MERCILESS GRASP!

WHOEVER YOU ARE, YOU TALK LIKE SOMEONE FROM THE WORLD ABOVE.

HOW DID YOU GET DOWN HERE? AND-- WHAT KIND OF PLACE IS THIS?

LISTEN-- AND GROW WISE:

IT ALL STARTED LONG AGO--BECAUSE THE PEOPLE OF THE SURFACE WORLD MOCKED ME...!

WHAT? ME GO OUT WITH YOU?

DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH!

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT HELL IS OTHER PEOPLE. WHETHER OR NOT THIS IS A UNIVERSAL TRUTH...

YES, YES...I KNOW YOU'RE QUALIFIED TO WORK HERE.

BUT YOU'D SCARE OUR OTHER EMPLOYEES AWAY.

...IT WAS SO FOR ME!

HEY, FELLA... IS THAT YOUR FACE...

OR ARE YOU WEARIN' A MASK?

NO OFFENSE.

FINALLY, I COULD STAND IN NO LONGER...

AND I BEGAN A LIFELONG SEARCH FOR A NEW PLACE, A BETTER PLACE--

A PLACE WHERE I COULD BE KING!

EVEN THIS LONELINESS IS BETTER THAN THE CRUELTY OF MY FELLOW MEN.

AND THEN, JUST WHEN I HAD ALMOST ABANDONED HOPE, MY LITTLE SKIFF WAS WASHED ASHORE ON **MONSTER ISLE**, AND...

THAT STRANGE **CAVERN**-- WHERE CAN IT **LEAD** TO?

SOON I **SAW** WHERE IT LED... TO THE LAND OF MY **DREAMS**...

DOWN THERE-- BELOW-- I'VE **FOUND** IT!

THE LEGENDARY KINGDOM AT **EARTH'S CENTER!**

BUT, IN THE DREAD **SILENCE** OF THAT HUGE CAVERN, THE SUDDEN SHOCK OF MY OUTCRY CAUSED A VIOLENT **AVALANCHE**, AND...

AAA

...WHEN IT WAS OVER, I HAD SOMEHOW MIRACULOUSLY **SURVIVED** THE FALL... BUT DUE TO THE IMPACT OF THE CRASH, I HAD **LOST MOST OF MY SIGHT!**

I-I'VE **FOUND** THE CENTER OF THE EARTH!

BUT I'M **STRANDED** HERE, LIKE-- LIKE A **HUMAN MOLE!**

THAT, HOWEVER, WAS TO BE THE **LAST** OF MY MISFORTUNES!

I MASTERED THE STRANGE **CREATURES** WHICH LIVE DOWN HERE-- MADE THEM DO MY **BIDDING**--

AND, WITH THEIR HELP, I CARVED OUT AN **UNDER-GROUND EMPIRE!**

WHAT **GOOD'S** IT DO YOU--IF YOU CAN'T **SEE** IT?

COME BACK WITH **US**, AND MAYBE WE COULD **HELP** YOU--!

WITLESS **STRIPLING!** DO YOU THINK I NEED **YOUR** HELP?

I'VE EVEN LEARNED TO **SENSE** THINGS IN THE DARK-- LIKE A **MOLE!**

HERE-- TRY TO **STRIKE** ME WITH THAT **POLE!**

HAH! I **SENSED** THAT COMING!

I HAVE DEVELOPED A NATURAL **RADAR SENSE**...

...A **WARNING SYSTEM** WHICH ALLOWS ME TO **EVADE** ANY DANGER!

COMPARED TO THE MOLE MAN, YOU ARE SLOW... CLUMSY!

HOLD STILL, BLAST YOU!

AH YES...I SHALL HOLD STILL, MY YOUNG FRIEND...

LONG ENOUGH TO DO... THIS!

UNNNH!

NOW, BEFORE I SLAY YOU BOTH--BEHOLD MY MASTER PLAN!

EACH OF THESE INDICATED TUNNELS LEAD TO A MAJOR CITY.

SOON, MY MIGHTY MINIONS SHALL ATTACK -- DESTROY EVERYTHING THAT LIVES ABOVE!

"MA GRIMM'S NUMBER-ONE SON HAD HEARD ENUFF! JUST AS MOLEY RANG FOR SOME'A HIS SUB-EARTH STOOGES, I CAME ON LIKE GANG-BUSTERS...

WHO IN THE NAME OF--?

IF YOU GOTTA PIN LABELS ON PEOPLE, CHARLIE...

JUST CALL ME THE EVER-LOVIN', BLUE-EYED THING!

"TURNED OUT, THOUGH, HE DIDN'T HAVETA CALL ME NUTHIN'! HE'D ALREADY DONE HIS CALLIN'-- AND THE NEXT THING I KNEW--

"--SOMETHIN' CAME CRAWLIN' UP FROM BELOW-- SOMETHING THAT MADE GODZILLA LOOK LIKE A BLAMED TAD-POLE!

HOLY COW!

"MAYBE I COULD 'A FOUGHT 'IM OFF, IF I COULD 'A FOUND A PLACE TO GRAB HOLD...

"BUT THE TORCH KEPT 'IM BUSY FOR ME...

"AND, WHEN THE REST OF THE CREW CAME BOUNDIN' AT US, LIKE REJECTS FROM 'CREATURE FEATURE'...

"...WE DECIDED TO TAKE IT ON THE CAM...

FOOM!

"...AFTER WHICH JOHNNY LET FLY WITH A FIRE-BLAST THAT BURIED THE WHOLE KIT AN' KABOODLE!

BY RIGHTS, THAT SHOULDA BEEN THE *LAST* WE SAW OF MOLEY...

BUT HE MUST HAVE MORE LIVES THAN A TRUCKLOAD OF *CATS*, 'CAUSE HE'S POPPED UP A *DOZEN* TIMES SINCE THEN...

AND THE *LAST* TIME WAS THE WORST OF 'EM *ALL!*

I REMEMBER OL' STRETCH HAD BOUGHT US THIS WEIRDO *HOUSE*, THAT WUZ JUST SITTIN' OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE *WOODS*...

AND NO *WONDER* IT WAS...

IT WAS *BAIT!* THE BIG, FAT *WORM* ON THE END OF THE MOLE MAN'S *HOOK!*

HE NEARLY *WASTED* US THAT TIME, TOO.

IT WUZN'T JUST THE *VIBRO-CHARGE* HE BUILT INTO THAT NUTTY *STAFF* OF HIS...

THE WHOLE *HOUSE* GAVE OFF SOME KIND'A *RAYS* THAT MADE US ALL--

"--*BLIND!*

THIS IS THE MOMENT I HAVE PRAYED FOR, *PLANNED* FOR--SINCE *FIRST* YOU FOUR FOILED MY BEST-LAID SCHEMES!

SUE! WHERE *ARE* YOU, DARLING? I--*CAN'T SEE!*

NONE OF US CAN, REED!

"THAT WAS PROB'LY THE *F.F.'S GREATEST* FIGHT YET--IF ANYBODY'D BEEN THERE TO *SEE* IT!

"BUT, NOBODY COULD LAY A *GLOVE* ON OL' MOLEY...

NOW FOR THE *FINAL BLOW!*

THE *COUP-DE-GRÂCE*, AS IT WERE!

"JUST THEN, *SUZIE* PROVED THAT A MAN'S BEST FRIEND *AIN'T* A HOUND DOG, WHEN--

YOUR *GLASSES!* I *HAVE* THEM!

NO! *NO!!* YOU *MUSTN'T*

MY *EYES*--SENSITIVE--I NEED THEIR *PROTECTION!*

"THEN, SUDDENLY, THE LIGHTS CAME ON AGAIN... FOR ALL OF US!

I--I CAN SEE AGAIN!

I HATE TO LOOK A GIFT HORSE IN THE CHOPS-- BUT WHAT HAPPENED?

THE MOLE MAN'S STAFF--IT STRUCK THE WALLS OF THE HOUSE WHEN SUE TACKLED HIM!

SOMEHOW IT MUST HAVE BROKEN THAT BLINDNESS-RAY GADGET!

BUT, WHATEVER HAPPENED-- ONE THING'S FOR SURE, BEN.

HE WON'T EVER USE THAT STAFF AGAINST US AGAIN!

YOU'VE RUINED ME--RUINED MY GREATEST PLAN!

"THAT TIME, WE EVEN HAD OL' MOLEY TRUSSED UP FOR A WHILE... BUT HE TRICKED US INTA LETTIN' HIM LOOSE...

"...AN' MANAGED TO TAKE A FLYIN' LEAP DOWN HIS BLASTED DROP TUBE IN THE MIDDLE 'A THE HOUSE!

"YEAH, I KNOW THEY SAY YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YA--

"--BUT THE MOLE MAN SURE TRIED!

"NEXT THING WE KNEW, HE BLEW UP THE WHOLE PLACE--AN' BLAMED NEAR TOOK US WITH IT!*

SHHROOM

"GUESS HE'S BACK IN THAT PLACE HE CALLS SUBTERRANIA NOW-- AN' HE CAN HAVE IT!

*THE FOREGOING OCCURRED IN ISSUES #88-90.--ROY.

SHEESH! I BEEN HANGIN' AROUND REED TOO LONG.

I BEEN CARRYIN' ON A REGULAR TALK-SHOW WITH MYSELF-- AN' I DON'T KNOW WHY.

IT'S LIKE I BEEN TRYIN' TO TELL MYSELF SOMETHIN'-- MAKE MYSELF NOTICE SOMETHIN' I MISSED BEFORE.

WELL, MAYBE I'M BLIND MYSELF, BUT I SURE DON'T--

BLIND?! SURE-- THAT'S IT!

I MUST BE SOME KINDA PRIZE GOOF-BALL NOT TO HAVE THOUGHT OF IT BEFORE.

ALL THOSE POWERS OF MOLEY'S-- ENUFF TO MAKE US ALL BLIND, THEN CURE US AGAIN--

A GUY WITH POWERS LIKE THAT-- MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP ALICIA SEE AGAIN!

AND IF HE DOES, BY GODFREY--

--I'LL MAKE 'IM USE THEM TO HELP HER--

--OR I'LL PULL HIS TWO-BIT KINGDOM DOWN AROUND HIS EARS!

RRUMMMMMMMMBBLL

...WHAT'S MORE, I KNOW HOW TO REACH 'IM-- THRU WHAT'S LEFT OF THAT NUTTY HOUSE OF HIS!

YOU! YOU'RE JUST THE MAN I WANT TO SEE, MISTER!

I'LL HAVETA HITCH A RIDE OUT THERE, BUT THEN--

OUR LILTIN' LANDLORD! EVICT ANY POOR WIDOWS LATELY, COLLINS?

DON'T TRY TO SOFT-SOAP ME, YOU MISSHAPEN SAVAGE! I KNOW YOU CAUSED THE TREMOR THAT JUST SHOOK THIS WHOLE BUILDING.

I'VE ALREADY STARTED COURT PROCEEDINGS TO EVICT THE WHOLE LOT OF YOU--

AND I'M WARNING YOU--

NO, BUDDY-BOY!

I'M WARNIN' YOU--

KEEP OUT OF MY WAY!

WAIT! LET ME DOWN-- AND WE'LL DISCUSS THIS LIKE CIVIL-IZED MEN--!

WHO, ME? I'M JUST A MISSHAPEN SAVAGE, REMEMBER?

BESIDES, I GOT ME A DATE AT THE CENTER OF THE EARTH...

TELL THE GANG I'LL BE HOME FOR SUPPER... WITH A GUEST...

...OR ELSE I WON'T BE HOME AT ALL!

NEXT: HE THAT HATH EYES...!

FANTASTIC FOUR

MARVEL COMICS GROUP

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20¢

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIX MAGAZINE!

FANTASTIC FOUR®

™

YOU SOUGHT THE MOLE MAN, BEN GRIMM--

--AND YOU HAVE FOUND HIM!

IN A WORLD WHERE THE SUN DARES NOT SHINE--

THE THING FIGHTS ALONE!

THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

STAN LEE *PRESENTS:* ROY THOMAS *WRITER/EDITOR* * JOHN BUSCEMA *ARTIST* * JOE SINNOTT *INKER* * ARTIE SIMEK *LETTERER*

WHERE THE SUN DARES NOT SHINE!

A LEVIATHAN IS ASTIR!

SOMEWHERE IN UPSTATE NEW YORK, THE EERIE **STILLNESS** OF A CERTAIN LONELY WOODED AREA IS RUDELY **SHATTERED** BY THE SUDDEN THUNDER OF AN ELEPHANTINE **TREAD**--BY THE HEART-STOPPING CRASH OF TOPPLING **TREES** --AND **FINALLY**, BY--

WATCH OUT, MOLE MAN!

THE **THING** IS COMIN' FOR YA!

THEN, JUST AS ABRUPTLY, ALL SOUND **CEASES**...AS THE MAN NAMED **BEN GRIMM** HALTS BEFORE BOMBED-OUT RUINS WHICH ONCE WERE A MOST UNIQUE **HOUSE**...

...AND KNOWS THAT HE STANDS, PERHAPS, ON THE THRESHOLD OF HIS OWN PARTICULAR **DESTINY**...!

SO *THIS* IS THE PLACE THAT WAS ONCE GONNA BE *HOME SWEET HOME* TO THE FABULOUS *F.F.*, HUH?

NOW LOOK AT IT--

NOT EXAC'LY A *CENTER-SPREAD* FROM *BETTER HOMES AN' GARDENS!*

SURE LOOKED DIFFERENT THE *LAST* TIME I SAW 'ER... *YESSIRREE!*

I CAN SEE IT ALL *NOW*--

--PLAIN AS IF IT WUZ *YESTERDAY*--

*"WE'D CAUGHT US THE **MOLE MAN**, AFTER HE HAD A CRACK AT TURNIN' THE WHOLE WORLD STONE-COLD **BLIND!*** * ONLY THING IS--HE BAMBOOZLED ME INTA SNAPPIN' HIS **ROPES**, AN'THEN--

OUT OF MY WAY!

EVEN THOUGH I CANNOT *SEE*--

--I STILL SHALL MAKE MY *ESCAPE!*

*ISSUES **88-90**, N'EST-CE PAS?
--ROY.

*OUI, RASCALLY. --STAN.

HEY! HOW'D HE MANAGE TA RACE STRAIGHT FOR THAT *SHAFT*-- IF HE'S *BLIND?*

FOOL! YOU'VE FORGOTTEN MY INFALLIBLE *RADAR SENSE!*

NOW I MUST *LEAVE* YOUR MOST PLEASANT COMPANY...

BUT I'LL BE *BACK* SOME DAY--

YOU CAN *DEPEND* ON IT!

COULDN'T *STRETCH* FOR HIM --IN *TIME*--!

WITH HIS ANTI-GRAVITY *DROP TUBE*--

--HE'LL BE BACK HOME IN *SUBTERRANIA* IN SECONDS!

AN' THEY CAN *HAVE* 'IM, RUBBER MAN!

IF I *NEVER* LAY EYES ON THAT CREEP AGAIN, IT'LL BE TEN YEARS *TOO SOON!*

SHEESH! I MAY WEAR A SIZE-27 BOOTIE... BUT THAT STILL NEVER STOPPED ME FROM PUTTIN' MY FOOT IN MY MOUTH!

'CAUSE HERE I AM, ALL SET TA PLAY IN THE MOLE MAN'S BALL PARK AGAIN!

AWW--NO SENSE TALKIN' ABOUT IT. GOTTA GET CLEARIN' THIS THING...

...AN' HOPE HE AINT BLOCKED THE SHAFT OFF FROM BELOW!

THAT'S MORE LIKE IT!

THOUGH, FER ALL THE GOOD THIS FANCY FLASHLIGHT OF REED'S DOES ME, I MIGHT AS WELL BE SPORTIN' SUNGLASSES.

IT'S BLACK AS DOC DOOM'S HEART DOWN THERE...!

WELL...I AINT GETTIN' NO YOUNGER. I BETTER DO ME SOME CLIMBIN'.

JUST WISH I'D HAD TIME TO SAY SO-LONG TO REED...AN' SUE ...EVEN OL' MATCH-HEAD...

...AND... TO ALICIA...

ALICIA! AT THE SOUND OF THAT WHISPERED WORD, ECHOING SOFTLY IN THE CAVERNOUS DARKNESS BELOW, HE PAUSES A MOMENT... REMEMBERS THE REASON BEHIND HIS DEADLY MISSION...

...REMEMBERS THAT THE MOLE MAN SEEMS TO CONTROL STRANGE SECRETS WHICH MIGHT HELP THE LOVELY BLIND GIRL WHOM BEN LOVES...

...MIGHT HELP HER DEVELOP A RADAR SENSE AKIN TO HIS OWN...

...MIGHT EVEN HELP HER...SEE AGAIN...!

BUT, IT IS TOO SOON TO HOPE... TO PLAN...

HE CAN ONLY... ACT.

THE MOLE MAN MUST BE BROUGHT BACK TO THE SURFACE--FORCED TO TELL WHAT HE MUST KNOW--!

SKRUTCH!

FRUNCHT!

IN ANCIENT GREECE, MOTHERS TOLD THEIR WARRIOR SONS: "RETURN WITH YOUR SHIELD... OR ON IT!"

BEN GRIMM WOULD HAVE KNOWN WHAT THEY MEANT.

WHILE, IN A CERTAIN CENTRALLY-LOCATED MANHATTAN PARK WHICH SHALL REMAIN NAMELESS...

...MAINLY BECAUSE EVERYONE IN AMERICA ALREADY KNOWS ITS NAME...

...A BLOND-HAIRED YOUTH SITS ALONE, UNACCUSTOMEDLY SILENT AMID THE HARMLESS FRIVOLITY OF A LATE-JULY DAY, AND DREAMS OF...

...CRYSTAL....!

YOU'RE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD--IN THE PLACE YOU CALL THE GREAT REFUGE.

SO HOW COME I HEAR YOUR NAME IN EVERY BREEZE...SEE YOUR FACE IN EVEN A CLOUDLESS SKY?

THIS IS MY WORLD...AND YOU CAN'T LIVE IN IT, CAN YOU?

BUT I COULD LIVE IN YOURS, COULDN'T I?

AND I WOULD--IN A MINUTE--IF IT WEREN'T FOR SUE, AND REED, AND BEN.

THEY NEED ME, AND I CAN'T DESERT THEM. I'M NOT A KID ANY MORE--I'M A MAN...

AND BEING A MAN... HURTS.

SOMBRE THOUGHTS...BUT ONES UNGUESSED-AT BY THOSE WHO STRIKE A LIGHTER CHORD THIS DAY...

WHAT'D I TELL YOU? THE HUMAN TORCH--AM I RIGHT?

WOW! I'VE ALWAYS GONE FOR OLDER MEN.

HIM I GOTTA MEET!

MAYBE IF I STARTED DATING OTHER GIRLS AGAIN, I COULD--NO! I'D JUST BE FOOLING MYSELF! NO USE IN--

HUH.??

HEY, TORCH--IF YOU ARE THE TORCH--YOU GOT A MINUTE?

WE WANNA TALK TO YOU--!

SORRY, PEOPLE! I JUST REMEMBERED I GOTTA GO SAVE THE UNIVERSE...

...OR SOMETHIN'!

THAT'S ALL I NEED RIGHT NOW--A FREAKIN' FAN CLUB!

WELL, SO MUCH FOR THINKIN' HE'D HELP US DRAW A CROWD FOR ANTI-POLLUTION RALLY!

HE'D RATHER BURN UP THE AIR--THAN SAVE IT.

HE'S ON AN EGO TRIP--JUST LIKE THE PAPERS ALWAYS SAID!

AN *EGO TRIP?* IF THAT CRUMB KNEW HOW LOUSY I *REALLY* FEEL, HE'D--

COME *OFF* IT, STORM! THAT WASN'T THE *SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST* YOU WERE MOPING ABOUT BACK THERE.

IT WAS THE LOVE LIFE OF *JOHNNY STORM*-- BOY BONFIRE!

YOU TRY TO THINK OF YOURSELF AS A *MAN.* WHAT A *LAUGH!*

REED'S A MAN-- WHO'D LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR SUE, OR FOR LITTLE *FRANKLIN!*

AND *BEN'S* A MAN, UNDERNEATH THAT CRAGGY HIDE-- MAYBE THE *BEST* MAN YOU'LL EVER *MEET!*

AND *YOU,* STORM? WHAT ARE *YOU?*

A NUTTY *KID*--SO WRAPPED UP IN YOUR *OWN* PROBLEMS, YOU PRACTICALLY CAUSED A *WRECK*--

--BY LANDING ON THE *STREET,* INSTEAD OF IN A 35TH-STORY *WINDOW!*

OH WELL--NO SENSE CAUSING ANY *MORE* COMMOTION.

I'LL TAKE OUR *PRIVATE ELEVATOR* UP. JUST HOPE I DON'T RUN INTO OUR EVER-LOVELY *LANDLORD* TODAY.

I'M NOT IN THE *MOOD.*

UH OH! I CAN FEEL HIS EYES DRILLING *HOLES* IN MY BACK-- BUT I'LL *IGNORE* HIM.

MADE IT! NOW, A SIMPLE PRESS OF MY ARTIFICIAL *BELLY-BUTTON...*

...AND I LEAVE EAGLE-EYE COLLINS BEHIND IN A CLOUD OF *DUST* AND A HEARTY--

HEY! THE DOOR'S *NOT* OPENING. NOTHING'S *HAPPENING!*

OH, BUT SOMETHING *IS* HAPPENING *MISTER* HIGH-AND-MIGHTY.

SOMETHING MOST *DEFINITELY* IS!

OBOY! HERE WE GO *AGAIN!*

I'M *SO* PLEASED YOU CAN SQUEEZE A MOMENT INTO YOUR HECTIC SCHEDULE TO *CONVERSE* WITH ME, MR. STORM.

YOUR COLLEAGUE *MR. GRIMM* WAS A WEE BIT *LESS* AGREEABLE.

SOMETHING ABOUT HAVING AN APPOINT-MENT AT THE *CENTER OF THE EARTH.*

AH, BUT YOU AND *I*--

YOU'RE PURRING LIKE A FRESHLY-FED *PANTHER,* COLLINS.

GET TO THE *POINT,* HUH?

ALL RIGHT! THE POINT IS *THIS:*

YOU AND YOUR FREAKISH FRIENDS HAVE *TERRORIZED* THE MORE RESPECTABLE TENANTS OF THIS BUILDING FOR THE *LAST TIME!*

I HAVE TAKEN *STEPS,* DO YOU HEAR ME-- *STEPS!*

DO YOU SEE THIS *COURT ORDER,* YOU MISERABLE YOUNG CUR--?

COURT ORDER? *I* DON'T SEE ANY COURT ORDER, MR. COLLINS.

ANYBODY AROUND HERE SEE A *COURT ORDER?*

SSSZZZLL

YOU FOOL!

I'LL JUST GET *ANOTHER* ONE-- THIS TIME, WITH *TEETH* IN IT!

YOU *DO* THAT, MR. C..! YOU JUST *DO* THAT LITTLE THING!

BUT MEANWHILE, THAT'S STILL *OUR* ELEVATOR, SO--

GUARDS! GET OVER HERE! WHAT AM I *PAYING* YOU FOR?

GUARDS!!

FOR ONCE, I'M *NOT* QUITE THE HOT-HEADED HALFWIT I *SOUNDED* LIKE BACK THERE.

I KNOW THERE'LL BE THE *DEVIL* TO PAY FOR BURNING THAT COURT ORDER--*WHATEVER* IT SAID--

BUT THAT'S *TOMORROW'S* HEADACHE.

I HAD TO *BUY TIME,* BECAUSE OF SOMETHING COLLINS SAID THAT JUST *SUNK IN...*

...SOMETHING ABOUT *BEN* CLAIMING HE WAS HEADING FOR THE *CENTER OF THE EARTH!*

IF COLLINS WASN'T BULLING, THAT SPELLS-- *MOLE MAN!*

BUT *WHY?* WE HAVEN'T HEARD FROM THAT TWO-BIT TYRANT FOR *MONTHS.*

WELL, ONLY ONE WAY TO *FIND OUT....!*

REED! SUE! WHERE ARE Y--?

I FORGOT! THEY'RE AWAY AT *WHISPER HILL...*

...VISITING THEIR SON...MY NEPHEW!

I'LL FEEL LIKE A PRIZE *DRAG,* BUSTING IN ON THEIR *HOLIDAY* LIKE THIS!

BUT IF THE *MOLE MAN* IS BACK--

HMMMMM

THEY'VE GOT TO *KNOW* ABOUT IT-- AND *FAST!*

AT THAT VERY MOMENT, IN A SECLUDED UPSTATE REGION EQUIDISTANT FROM BOTH MANHATTAN AND THE MOLE MAN'S FORMER DOMICILE...

ISN'T THAT *CUTE,* REED? SEE HOW HE TWEAKS YOUR *NOSE?*

I CAN DO A LOT MORE THAN *SEE,* HONEY.

I CAN *FEEL,* TOO.

FATHER AND SON AT PLAY... A *HEART-WARMING* SIGHT, MR. RICHARDS.

BUT, DON'T YOU THINK YOU SHOULD ANSWER THE *ALARM* IN YOUR *VEHICLE?*

WHAT ALARM, MISS HARKNESS? I DON'T--

WHY--THERE IT *GOES!* BUT HOW COULD YOU HAVE KNOWN IN *ADVANCE--?*

I *KNEW.* I CAN SAY NO MORE.

REEEEEEE

OH, *REED--* DO YOU THINK THAT SOMETHING--?

EASY, DARLING! NO SENSE JUMPING TO HASTY *CONCLUSIONS.*

NOT WHEN THE *ANSWER* IS ONLY A FEW SHORT SECONDS *AWAY!*

LET ME ACTIVATE THE VIZI-PHONE, AND THEN WE'LL SEE WHAT--

SUE--IT'S JOHNNY!

--STORM, CALLING REED RICHARDS! COME IN, REED--!

I'M HERE, SON. WHAT'S UP?

YOU KNOW I WOULDN'T BUG YOU IF I DIDN'T THINK IT WAS IMPORTANT, REED.

HERE'S THE STRAIGHT SCOOP--AT LEAST WHAT LITTLE I KNOW OF IT--!

MOMENTS LATER, WHEN THE TORCH HAS FINISHED...

YOU WERE RIGHT TO CONTACT US AT ONCE, JOHNNY.

THIS LOOKS SERIOUS.

IF BEN'S GONE AFTER THE MOLE MAN, FOR SOME REASON--

--HE'S ALMOST CERTAIN TO HAVE HEADED FOR THE HOUSE THAT FIEND BUILT AND DESTROYED!

I'LL MEET YOU THERE--IN HALF AN HOUR!

BUT DON'T DO ANYTHING RASH--LIKE ENTERING THE RUINS ALONE!

STILL TREATING ME LIKE THE NOT-TOO-SWIFT KID BROTHER, EH, REED?

WELL, DON'T WORRY YOUR HEAD ABOUT ME, LEADER-MAN...

IF ANYTHING'S HARMED THAT OVERGROWN CLUNK-HEAD...

SAVE YOUR CONDOLENSCES FOR THE MOLE MAN!

FLAME ON!

HAVE NO FEAR, JOHNNY STORM--NOTHING HAS HAPPENED YET TO THE ARMORED AVATAR YOU CALL THE THING--

BUT, HE LOOKS LIKE HE MIGHT JUST BE GETTING THERE--!

SHEESH! I DUNNO WHERE THIS COCKAMAMEY TUNNEL'S LEADIN' ME...

BUT THIS SURE AINT THE SCENIC ROUTE TO WAXAHACHIE, TEXAS!

GUESS MAYBE I SHOULD'A TOLD *REED AN' JOHNNY* WHAT I WUZ GONNA DO--THEY WOULD'A BEEN GLAD TO *TAG ALONG.*

BUT THIS IS *MY* SHOW, AND I AINT ABOUT TO--

HUH? WHAT'S THAT *SOUND*--COMIN' FROM ONE'A THEM *SIDE-TUNNELS* OVER THERE?

SOUNDS ALMOST LIKE--SOME-BODY *SINGIN'!*

A *GIRL!*

WELL, *ONE* THING'S FOR SURE--IT AINT *ARETHA FRANKLIN!*

FUNNY, THOUGH--THERE'S SOME KINDA *GLOW* UP AHEAD.

OKAY, BENJY... YOU KNOW YOU CAN RESIST ANYTHIN' BUT *TEMPTATION.*

GO AHEAD... BUT JUST BE READY FOR *ANYTHING!*

LAUDABLE SENTIMENTS--AND *LOGICAL* ONES, VOICED BY ONE WHO HAS BATTLED RADIATION-SPAWNED TITAN AND INTER-GALACTIC TROLL--

BUT, CAN A MAN BE INTELLECTUALLY PREPARED FOR--THIS??

HOLY CROW!

BEN'S REACTION IS SWIFT--NEARLY INSTANTANEOUS--!

DUNNO WHY THAT GAL'S PLAYIN' *SI-REEN,* WHILE THAT FOUR-FOOTED CREEPYCRAWLER'S COILIN' UP TO *STRIKE*--

BUT MA GRIMM'S LITTLE BOY KNOWS A *DAMSEL IN DISTRESS* WHEN HE SEES ONE--

THA-BOOM!

--AND HE'S JUST *SEEN* ONE!

WHAT IN--? HEY, YOU-- THAT WUZ ONE'A MY SPECIAL PUNCHES!

YER SUPPOSED TA LIE DOWN AN' PLAY DEAD NOW--

--NOT PICK ME UP LIKE A SOGGY BEANBAG!

YOU WANNA PLAY ROUGH, DO YA, SILENT SAM?

OKAY, BABY-- YOU WANT IT--

YOU GOT IT!

TO PARAPHRASE MY OL' PAL BUFFALO BOB--

"WHAT TIME IS IT, KIDS?"

IT'S

CLOBBERIN' TIME!

FWOF!

BWOOM!

-WHEEE-EW!- IT TOOK THREE'A MY SUNDAY BEST TO LAY OUT THIS OVERGROWN TADPOLE-- WHATEVER IT IS.

IT'S ENUFF TA MAKE A SENSITIVE GUY LIKE ME START DOUBTIN' HIS MANHOOD!

YOU! MAN-LIKE CREATURE! YOU MAY APPROACH THE DIVINE PRESENCE.

YA DON'T SAY!

YOU INTEREST ME, GROTESQUE ONE. I WOULD LEARN MORE OF YOU-- FROM YOUR OWN LIPS.

BUT, YOUR HIGHNESS--HE HAS SLAIN ONE OF YOUR SACRED MOUNTS!

SURELY, FOR SUCH AN AFFRONT, HE HIMSELF MUST BE SLAIN, NOT--

MMMFF!-

KEEP SILENT, LACKEY-- AND KEEP DISTANT!

YOU MEAN-- THAT THING BELONGS TO YOU-- LIKE A PET PONY?

BUT THE WAY IT WAS COMIN' AT YOU --I THOUGHT--

AND YOU WERE CORRECT, MY VALIANT DEFENDER.

THE KRAAWLS, AS WE ATLANTEANS TERM THEM, ARE A REBELLIOUS TYPE OF BEAST...

...WHICH FROM TIME TO TIME MAY BE KEPT IN LINE ONLY BY SPECIAL CHANTS KNOWN TO NONE BUT KALA.

"KALA"... I TAKE IT THAT'S YOU.

BUT, YOU SAID..."WE ATLANTEANS"...!

I MAY NOT KNOW MUCH, LADY...

BUT THE SUB-MARINER YOU AINT!

THE SUB-MARINER? I HAVE NEVER HEARD OF THE ONE OF WHOM YOU SPEAK.

BUT WE ARE DWELLERS ALL IN THE NETHERWORLD WHICH EXISTS BENEATH YOUR FEET...AND I AM KALA, ITS QUEEN.

I DIDN'T THINK YOU WUZ A SCULLERY MAID.

SCUL--? AHH... SOME BAROQUE ATTEMPT AT HUMOR. I SEE.

PERHAPS A FEW MORE WORDS WILL SET YOUR MIND AT EASE...

I'M ALL EARS, QUEENIE.

"WE NETHERWORLDERS ARE DESCENDANTS OF THE WONDROUS WARLORDS OF ONCE-MIGHTY ATLANTIS--WHOSE SURFACE-WORLD CIVILIZATION WAS ONCE THE GLORY OF THE UNIVERSE!*

*--AND OF NO DIRECT RELATION TO THAT OF NAMOR'S AMPHIBIOUS ATLANTIS. --ROY.

"THEN, LONG EONS AGO, A SERIES OF EARTH-QUAKES UNLEASHED GIGANTIC TIDAL WAVES--AGAINST WHICH EVEN ATLANTIS COULD NOT STAND.

"BUT, OUR MEN OF SCIENCE HAD PREPARED FOR SUCH CATASTROPHE--AND HAD CONSTRUCTED A VAST TRANSPARENT DOME OVER MOST OF OUR GREAT CITY-STATE--

"--SO THAT, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS HURLED TO THE SHIFTING SEA-BOTTOMS--ATLANTIS SURVIVED!

"IN FACT, IT THRIVED UNDER--AS WE WERE CAPABLE OF CREATING OUR OWN ATMOSPHERE WITHIN THE DOME--!

"YET, EACH YEAR, THE CITY SANK MORE DEEPLY INTO THE EARTH--

"--TILL IT REACHED AT LAST THE CORE OF THE PLANET--

"--WHERE IT NOW EXISTS AS--THE NETHERWORLD!

BUT, I SHOULD SPEAK ONLY OF HAPPY TIMES... NOT OF SAD.

FOR, I AM JOURNEYING EVEN NOW TO JOIN MY BELOVED...MY BETROTHED...

PERHAPS YOU HAVE HEARD OF HIM.

HE IS CALLED... THE MOLE MAN.

'S-SCUZE ME, LADY...BUT THESE *ECHO CHAMBERS* BEEN PLAYIN' HECK WITH MY *EARS*.

FOR A *MINNIT* THERE, I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU WUZ ENGAGED TO THE *MOLE MAN!*

ENGAGED...YES. OUR *MONITORS* HAVE TOLD US YOU USE *THAT* TERM, AS WELL.

IF YOU WISH TO *MEET*, HIM, PERHAPS HE WILL *REWARD* YOU FOR RESCUING ME...

...EVEN THOUGH I *NEEDED* SCANT RESCUE.

I'M AFRAID I ALREADY *MET* YER ONE-AN'-ONLY...AN' WE DON'T EXACTLY EXCHANGE *CHRISTMAS CARDS.*

STILL, *I'D* BE WILLIN' TO BURY THE HATCHET IF *HE* WUZ, SO MEBBE...

IT IS *SETTLED* THEN. *COME.*

THIS *SEDAN-CHAIR* WILL PROCEED LESS SWIFTLY THAN A *KRAAWL...*

BUT PERHAPS YOU AND I MAY USE THE OCCASION TO BECOME *BETTER* ACQUAINTED.

PERHAPS I CAN EVEN *MEDIATE* IN YOUR ANCIENT QUARREL WITH MY BELOVED...

I *HOPE* SO, QUEENIE. FOR *EVERYBODY'S* SAKE...

I SURE AS BLAZES *HOPE* SO!

E.R. BURROUGHS TO THE CONTRARY, TIME PASSES AT PRECISELY THE SAME RATE *ABOVE* THE GROUND AS *BENEATH* IT--AND SO, EVEN AS THE SUB-EARTH SAFARI WINDS ITS DIM-LIT WAY--

HALF-HOUR'S ALMOST *SHOT!* IF THEY DON'T SHOW IN A *MINUTE*, I'M GONNA--

THERE THEY ARE!

THE *FANTASTI-CAR* TRAVELS AT LEAST AS FAST AS I CAN *FLY.*

SO WHAT *KEPT* YOU, PEOPLE?

NOTHING TO *CONCERN* YOURSELF ABOUT...!

JUST A LITTLE... PRIVATE *DISCUSSION*, JOHNNY.

"NOTHING TO CONCERN YOURSELF ABOUT!"

IS THAT HOW TRIVIAL EVERYTHING IS TO YOU, REED RICHARDS...

...WHEN IT'S YOUR WIFE YOU'RE DEALING WITH, INSTEAD OF A BUNCH OF TEST-TUBES?

LOOK--I'D JUST FEEL BETTER IF YOU'D HAVE STAYED BEHIND WITH LITTLE FRANKLIN, THAT'S ALL.

WELL, UH--I, UH--GUESS WE'D BETTER MOVE OUT--!

GOOD IDEA, JOHNNY.

I SEE BEN MUST ALREADY HAVE CLEARED THE WAY FOR US.

BUT--I CAN'T RESIST ASKING YOU ONE LAST TIME, SUE, DARLING. IF YOU'D ONLY--

NO, REED! I'M FRANKLIN'S MOTHER--

BUT I'M ALSO YOUR WIFE --AND A MEMBER OF THIS TEAM--

AND, IF OUR FRIEND BEN GRIMM IS DOWN THAT SHAFT SOMEWHERE--PERHAPS FIGHTING FOR HIS VERY LIFE--

--MY PLACE IS HERE--

--WITH THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

NOW--SHALL WE GO?

I GUESS NO MARRIAGE--EVEN A SO-CALLED PERFECT ONE LIKE REED AND SUE'S--IS EVER AS SMOOTH AS IT LOOKS.

I JUST HOPE THIS ISN'T THE START OF ANYTHING.

OTHERWISE --IT COULD SPELL THE END OF THE F.F.!

ALL RIGHT, SUE--SINCE I CAN'T TALK YOU OUT OF GOING WITH US--

FIRST, I'VE GOT TO GAIN US A BIT OF ALTITUDE--

AND NOW--WE'RE OFF AND RUNNING!

OH, REED--DEAREST--WHATEVER I SAID BACK THERE --WHATEVER LIES AHEAD--

REMEMBER THAT I LOVE YOU--THAT I'VE ALWAYS LOVED YOU--!

WHEN I FORGET THAT, MRS. RICHARDS...

...I'LL ALSO HAVE FORGOTTEN HOW TO BREATHE!

JOHNNY--HOW ABOUT THROWING A LITTLE LIGHT ON THE SUBJECT?

NOT A VERY ORIGINAL WAY OF ASKING, LEADER-MAN...

BUT WE AIM TO PLEASE!

IF ONLY IT WAS AS EASY TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THIS WHOLE THING IS ALL ABOUT...!

AGREED! BUT, QUITE FRANKLY, THE REDOUBTABLE THING ISN'T DOING MUCH BETTER HIMSELF AT SIFTING THE FLOW OF EVENTS, AS...

YOUR NAME, THEN, IS BEN GRIMM? QUITE FASCINATING.

SOME TITLE, PERHAPS? SOME HERITAGE OF NOBLE BIRTH?

HAVE YOU NO OTHER NAME BY WHICH YOU ARE KNOWN?

NOT HARDLY. I--

WUZZAT SOUND?

MAYBE I'M JUST GETTIN' SPOOKED BY THE DARK, BUT--

SUBTERRANEANS!

YOUR BOY FRIEND AINT GOT AS GOOD MANNERS AS HE COULD, QUEENIE-- OR ELSE HE WOULDN'T SEND THESE CREEPS OUT TO GREET US!

THEY AINT COMIN' ON TOO FRIENDLY, EITHER!

WELL, COULD BE THAT BUSTIN' A FEW HEADS WILL STRAIGHTEN THINGS OUT.

AN' EVEN IF IT DON'T--IT'D MAKE YERS TRULY FEEL A LOT BETTER!

SO, I THINK I'LL JUST--

YEEOW

SPLUMP!

WOTTA REVOLTIN' DEVELOPMENT THIS IS!

IT WUZ A TRAP! ...AN' I WALKED RIGHT INTO IT!

I'M STRUCK --TO SOME KINDA SUPER-THICK WEBBING!

WELL, KALA CAN PROBABLY SET THINGS RIGHT, SOON AS SHE GETS HOLD OF OL' MOLEY, BUT JUST THE SAME--

HEY! NOW THE WEBBING'S BEIN' PULLED UP--TO AN UPRIGHT POSITION--

AN' RIGHT NOW, WHERE IT GOES-- I GO!

AND, THERE'S KALA--WITH THE MOLE MAN!

HEY, QUEENIE-BABY...SET YER LOVER-BOY STRAIGHT, WILLYA?

TELL 'IM ABOUT HOW I--

REALLY, BENJAMIN GRIMM...I MUST ASK YOU TO LOWER YOUR VOICE.

YOU ARE, AFTER ALL, A GUEST IN MY HOME.

HE IS TRULY AS SIMPLE AS YOU DEPICTED HIM, MY LOVE.

YOU--SET ME UP!?

IMAGINE HIS BELIEVING THAT ONE WHOSE RACE HAS MONITORED THE SURFACE WORLD FOR CENTURIES WOULD BE IGNORANT OF THE WORLD-FAMOUS THING!

SO HELP ME, GIRLIE--WHEN I GET OFF'A THIS CONTRAPTION, I'M GONNA--AAARRHH!

AN INSULT TO MY BETROTHED IS AN INSULT TO ME, BEN GRIMM.

FRAZZL

YOU'D DO WELL TO REMEMBER THAT.

REMEMBER THIS, ALSO--THAT I VOWED REVENGE ON YOU--ON ALL THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

STILL, I NEVER DREAMED YOU WOULD STUMBLE SO EASILY INTO MY CLUTCHES.

TELL ME--WHAT DO YOU SEEK HERE, THAT MAKES YOU SO FOOLHARDY?

SKIP IT, EAGLE-BEAK.

AGAIN, I REQUEST YOU SPEAK MORE RESPECTFULLY TO ME, IN FRONT OF MY FIANCEE.

KALA, MY DEAR... WHY NOT TELL HIM HOW MUCH OF YOUR EARLIER STORY WAS TRUE.

NEARLY ALL OF IT, BELOVED... EXCEPT FOR MY FEIGNED IGNORANCE OF THE WORLD ABOVE.

AND, ONCE, I MET IRON MAN...*

*WAY BACK IN TALES OF SUSPENSE #43, --R.

HE PERSUADED ME TO WED BAXI, MY ADVISOR...DEAR BAXI, SINCE DECEASED.

BUT NOW, I HAVE FOUND SOMEONE WHO IS TRULY MY EQUAL, BEN GRIMM.

YOU CALL HIM THE MOLE MAN.

I CALL HIM... BELOVED.

A PRETTY SPEECH, QUEENIE--BUT IT'LL BE A COLD DAY IN HELVETIA BEFORE I BELIEVE ANYTHIN' YOU TELL ME AGAIN.

RIGHT ABOUT NOW, IF YOU SAID IT WUZ RAININ', I'D BUY A PAIR'A SHADES.

SILENCE, DOG--UNLESS YOU WISH TO BE PUNISHED AGAIN!

YOU *TALK* BIG, SHORT-STUFF... BUT I SEEM TO RECALL THERE'S *ANOTHER* UNDERGROUND NAPOLEON, NAME OF *TYRANNUS!*

WHAT'S *HE* GOT TO SAY ABOUT THIS "*SUPREME OVERLORD*" CRUD?

OH *YES*... MY OLD *ANTAGONIST*...

YOU-- *LACKEY!* COME *HERE!*

LOOK, WORM OF THE UPPER AIR...

LOOK UPON THIS *MESMERIZED SLAVE* WHO SERVES ME MOST WILLINGLY OF *ALL*...

...AND TELL ME THAT I AM *NOT* MASTER OF MY SUNKEN SPHERE!

YOU ACKNOWLEDGE MY SUPREMACY IN SUBTERRANIA-- *DON'T* YOU, *TYRANNUS?*

YES... GREAT ONE....!

ULLP!!

NOW THAT YOU HAVE BEEN VERBALLY CHASTIZED, MR. GRIMM, IT PLEASES ME TO HUMBLE YOU *FURTHER*...

...BY REVEALING TO YOU MY *PRECISE* PLAN FOR WREAKING *REVENGE* ON THE WORLD WHICH *SCORNED* ME...

ME--ITS MOST *BRILLIANT* SCION!

BEHOLD YONDER *SHAFT*--

--A HUGE HERCULEAN *DAGGER*-- POISED AND POINTED AT THE *SOFT UNDERBELLY* OF THE OUTER WORLD!

BUT IT ALSO THRUSTS *DOWNWARD*-- DOWN THRU ROCK AND SHALE AND BASALT--

"--DOWN TO THE VERY **CENTER** OF THE PLANET--THE GREAT **MOLTEN CORE** WHICH LIES SEETHING BENEATH EVEN **OUR FEET**--!

"MY SPECIALLY-CONSTRUCTED, ALL BUT **INDESTRUCTIBLE** SHAFT WILL **TAP** THAT MOLTEN HEART--

"--FUNNEL **UNTOLD MEGATONS** OF BURNING LAVA UP THRU LONG MILES, AND **SPEW** THEM OUT INTO THE **METROPOLIS** WHICH LIES MOST NEARLY ABOVE US--INTO **NEW YORK CITY**--!

"AH, BUT THAT WILL BE ONLY THE **BEGINNING**--!

"ALREADY, OTHER SHAFTS ARE BEING BUILT BY MY ALMOST LIMITLESS NUMBER OF SERVANTS-- AND THESE WILL BE UTILIZED SOON AFTER--

"--TILL ALL THE HATED SURFACE WORLD IS AFIRE--

--AN ETERNALLY-BLAZING MONUMENT TO THE MIGHT AND MAJESTY OF THE MOLE MAN!

YER FULLA BEANS, JERK!

WHAT MAKES YA THINK YOU CAN DRILL SO CLOSE TO ALL THAT LAVA YOU WUZ TALKIN' ABOUT?

YOU MAY ANSWER HIM, MY DEAR.

GLADLY, MY LOVE...

"REMEMBER, BEN GRIMM... IT IS NOT WE OURSELVES WHO LABOR ON THESE SHAFTS, BUT MY BELOVED'S SELFLESS, NIGH-MINDLESS SUBTERRANEANS...

"THEY KNOW NO CAUSE FOR LIVING BUT TO SERVE THEIR MASTER ...TILL DEATH DO THEM PART!

"ALREADY, COUNTLESS THOUSANDS OF THEM HAVE BEEN CONSUMED BY ACCIDENTALLY-ESCAPING FLAMES OVER THE PAST MONTHS--

"BUT THAT IS LESS THAN ONE PERCENT OF THEIR TOTAL NUMBER. IN SHORT, THEY ARE THE MOST EXPENDABLE OF CREATURES--

--AND THUS, THE MOST USEFUL!

I HAD YOU FIGGERED ALL WRONG, QUEENIE.

YOU AN' MOLEY ARE THE BIGGEST MASS MURDERERS SINCE HITLER!

HITLER? A MERE AMATEUR-- RESPONSIBLE FOR A PALTRY 20,000,000 DEATHS!

THAT IS NOTHING, GRIMM... SIMPLY NOTHING.

OUR SHAFTS--DESIGNED BY KALA'S ENGINEERS AND BUILT BY MY MINIONS--WILL CAUSE THE DEATH OF THREE BILLION!

THREE BILLION SOULS--NONE OF WHOM WILL EVER MOCK ME AGAIN!

MOLE MAN, I THINK YOU JUST SAID THE MAGIC WORD!

I BEEN STRUGGLIN' ALL ALONG, TRYIN' TO GET LOOSE--BUT I COULDN'T QUITE MAKE IT--

MAYBE 'CAUSE I WAS FIGHTIN' JUST FOR ME --AN' A GAL NAMED ALICIA!

BUT NOW, LOOKS LIKE I GOT A WHOLE PLANET TO SAVE--

--AN' *BLAMED* IF I DON'T THINK I MIGHT JUST BE *UP* TO IT!

SSIZZ

YOU *FOOL!* YOUR WRITHINGS WILL MERELY *INTENSIFY* YOUR SUFFERINGS!

ZZZZZZZ

MEBBE-- THAT'S THE *DIFFERENCE*-- BETWEEN US, CREEP!

I--DON'T *MIND* A LITTLE SUFFERIN'-- IF I GOT ME--A GOOD *REASON*--

ZZZAK!

AND YOU JUST GAVE ME *THREE BILLION* OF 'EM.!!

I-- *DID* IT! *I'M FREE!!*

BUT, I FEEL *WEAK*--AS A BLASTED *KITTEN*--!

BELOVED-- WE MUST *STOP* HIM, BEFORE--

NOT *WE*, DEAREST. WE NEEDN'T SOIL OUR *OWN* REGAL FINGERS...

...NOT WHILE MY *SUBTERRANEANS* STILL ABOUND!

MOST TIMES... I COULD TAKE *ALLA* THESE PUNKS...WITH ONE LITTLE *PINKY*...

...NOT NOW...!

BUT... NOT *NOW*...

YET, WHO IS TO SAY WHAT COURAGE A MAN MAY FIND, IN THE SUDDEN DESPERATION OF A MOMENT...FIND, AND RIP UNTIMELY FROM THE UNPLUMBED DEPTHS OF HIS SOUL?

AN ABSTRUSE PHILOSOPHICAL QUERY, THAT..!

STILL, ONE WHICH THE OH-SO-SINISTER SUBTERRANEANS COULD ANSWER THIS DAY...

...IF TONGUE OR MIND COULD MOVE THEM...

LIKE THE THING'S HAMMERING FIST!

SHADES OF THE SUBSTRATA!

TRULY, THIS ONE IS A FOE MORE FORMIDABLE EVEN THAN IRON MAN.

HE SEEMS HURT, AND IN BITTER PAIN--YET HE ESCAPES, AND WE CANNOT STOP HIM!

YOU UNDER-ESTIMATE ME, LOVELY ONE.

PERHAPS IN ONE SENSE BEN GRIMM HAS ESCAPED...

"BUT, I FORESAW THAT POSSIBILITY...AND SO, THE ELECTRIFIED WEBBING WHICH HELD HIM HAD MORE PURPOSES THAN ONE.

"THUS, EVEN AS HE NOW STUMBLES AND STAGGERS HENCE, TO LICK HIS WOUNDS AND FIGHT ANOTHER HOUR...

"...THAT SECONDARY PURPOSE TAKES EFFECT, WITHOUT HIS KNOWLEDGE OR SUSPICION...

"...A DELAYED-ACTION EFFECT WHICH ALTERS THE ELECTRICAL AURA WHICH SURROUNDS ALL LIVING CREATURES...

"...ALTERS, CHANGES HIM...SO THAT ANY EARTHLY EYES WHICH NOW MAY BEHOLD HIM, WILL SEE HIM AS THE MOST LOATHSOME OF MONSTERS!"

A MOST *CLEVER* MODIFICATION OF OUR ORIGINAL ATLANTEAN DESIGN, BELOVED. BUT, TO WHAT *PURPOSE*--?

BEHOLD, DEAR KALA... THE THING'S *FRIENDS,* EVEN NOW STANDING BY THE FOOT OF MY *DROP TUBE!*

I HAVE BEEN... *EXPECT-ING* THEM.

YOU NEED SAY *NO MORE,* MY PRECIOUS. WE SHALL LET *THEM* BE--

"...THEIR COLLEAGUE'S EXECUTIONERS!!

BEN COULD BE *ANYWHERE*-- IN A MILLION DARKENED *SIDE-TUNNELS.*

WHICH WAY DO WE *GO,* REED?

I DON'T KNOW, SUE. FOR ONCE-- *I JUST DON'T KNOW!*

GOTTA KEEP *MOVIN'*... GOTTA...

WELL, I'LL BE A--

MY *VOICE* IS SHOT...JUST LIKE THE *REST* OF ME.

BUT...IF I CAN JUST *REACH* 'EM...

HERE I AM, KIDS...RIGHT OVER *HERE...!*

LOOK--UP *THERE*--ON THAT *RIDE!* WHAT THE *DEVIL*--?

I *SEE* IT, JOHNNY! AND WHAT'S MORE-- *IT SEES US!*

REED--IT'S *CHARGING* US! IT'S HIDEOUS-- *MONSTROUS*-- WE'VE GOT TO *DO* SOMETHING--!

WHAT'S *WRONG* WITH THEM? THEY ACT LIKE THEY DON'T *RECOGNIZE* ME!

HERE COMES THE *TORCH!* THAT'S MORE *LIKE* IT.

IT'S *ME,* MATCH-HEAD! YER OL' PAL *BENJY!* NOW LET'S CUT THE *CRUD,* AN'--

NO SWEAT, LEADER-MAN! I *GOT* 'IM!

ONE *MORE* BLAST LIKE THAT ONE--

--AND THAT MONSTER'S NEVER GONNA MENACE ANYBODY AGAIN!!

FZZAP!

NEXT:

DEATH IN A DARK AND LONELY PLACE!

FANTASTIC FOUR

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIX MAGAZINE!

FANTASTIC FOUR®

LET ME GO, REED! I'VE GOT TO DESTROY IT! I'VE GOT TO!

NO, TORCH-- STOP! IT'S BEN YOU'RE ATTACKING!

IT'S BEN!!

REED! IT-- IT'S TOO LATE! HE'S NOT BREATHING!!

FREE BONUS! FOUR BIG EXTRA PAGES OF FULL-COLOR PIN-UPS!

THE MOLE MAN TRIUMPHANT! A WORLD IN PERIL! THE F.F.-- AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS!

DIVIDED-- WE FALL!

THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

STAN LEE PRESENTS: ROY THOMAS WRITER/EDITOR * JOHN BUSCEMA ARTIST * JOE SINNOTT EMBELLISHER * ARTIE SIMEK LETTERER

DEATH IN A DARK AND LONELY PLACE!

WHAT'S THIS??

YOU MEAN TO SAY OUR CATACLYSMIC COVER SCENE **WASN'T** JUST A SHILL? IS THAT REALLY A FIGHTING-MAD **HUMAN TORCH**--LASHING OUT IN LETHAL **ANGER** AT A FIERCELY-EMBATTLED **THING**??

I **GOT** 'IM! ONE **MORE** BLAST--

--AND THAT MONSTER'S **NEVER** GONNA MENACE ANYBODY **AGAIN!**

FZZZZZZAP

YOU BETTER **BELIEVE** IT'S REAL! NOW **READ ON,** MACDUFF--!

HE'S STILL MOVING! BUT NOT FOR LONG!

HURRY, SUE! WE'VE GOT TO REACH JOHNNY--!

REACH HIM? BUT WHY, REED?

LOOKS LIKE HE'S DOING WELL ENOUGH WITHOUT OUR HELP!

AND SO IT WOULD SEEM, IF YOU HAPPEN TO BE THE BLOODTHIRSTY TYPE--

--WHICH REED, SUE, AND JOHNNY DEFINITELY AREN'T!

SO WHY THIS SANGUINARY DISPLAY--THIS VIOLENT ATTACK BY ONE MEMBER OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST FIGHTING GROUP--UPON ANOTHER?

SKROO

THE ANSWER IS SIMPLE--IF YOU COULD BUT GLIMPSE THIS SUBTERRANEAN WONDERWORLD THRU THE BLAZING EYES OF THE HUMAN TORCH--!

FOR, WHILE WE WITNESS THE SORRY SPECTACLE OF A PAIN-WRACKED BEN GRIMM--

ZOT!

--JOHNNY STORM SEES NAUGHT BUT A VILE HELLSPAWN, WHICH HAD SHAMBLED LOATHSOMELY TOWARD THEM!

ZOT!

I DON'T GET IT! IT'S NOT POSSIBLE!

I HIT THAT CREEP WITH EVERYTHING SHORT OF MY NOVA FLAME--KNOCKED IT DOWN--

--AND IT'S STILL ALIVE!

BUT--NOT FOR LONG, SONNY-BOY!

CAN'T TAKE--ANY MORE'A YER FIREWORKS--OR I'VE HAD IT--FOR GOOD!

IF ONLY I COULD TALK --SAY SOMETHIN'--BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE--!

BUT YOU **CAN'T** TALK, CAN YOU, BENJAMIN J. GRIMM.?

ALL YOU CAN DO IS GASP--AND **REMEMBER**--!*

IN ONE FIRE-SWEPT, MADDENING **MOMENT**, YOU REMEMBER IT **ALL**--THE DIZZYING DROP DOWN THAT NIGH-ENDLESS **SHAFT**--THE THIRSTY **BLACK-NESS** WHICH ENGULFED YOU--!

ALICIA! IT WAS ALL FOR **HER** THAT YOU TOOK THE PLUNGE, WASN'T IT, BEN.?

THE HOPE OF BRINGING **SIGHT** ONCE MORE--TO THE **GIRL YOU LOVE!**

FOR HER SAKE, YOU BRAVED THESE NIGHT-DARK DEPTHS, AND FOUGHT THE SLITHERING **KRAAWL**--

--ONLY TO FALL **PREY** TO THE INSIDIOUS WILES OF **KALA**, QUEEN OF THE NETHER-WORLD--SHE WHO IS THE **BETROTHED** OF THE WORLD-HATING **MOLE MAN!**

AND NOW, AS YOU GROVEL AMONG ICY STALAGMITES, YOU FEAR YOU WILL DIE WITH AN EVEN **GREATER** BURDEN THAN **ALICIA** UPON YOUR MIND--

--THE KNOWLEDGE THAT, EVEN NOW, THE MOLE MAN AND KALA ARE READYING A SERIES OF DEADLY **SHAFTS**--WHICH WILL SPEW THE MOLTEN CONTENTS OF **EARTH'S CORE** OVER ALL THE **SURFACE WORLD!**

SO YOU **CAN'T** DIE--NOT WITH **THAT** GRIM SECRET HEAVY ON YOUR PARCHED LIPS, **CAN** YOU, BEN GRIMM.?

OR **CAN** YOU??

*AS CAN **YOU**, SAHIB--IF YOU READ OUR **PREVIOUS** ISSUE.--ROY.

FOR, IF A NEAR-BERSERK **HUMAN TORCH** HAS HIS WAY...PERHAPS WE'VE SPOKEN **TOO SOON...!**

OKAY-- I'VE BUILT UP **ENOUGH FIRE-POWER--**

NOW HERE'S WHERE I **SINGE** THAT MONSTER'S HAIRY HIDE-- **FOR KEEPS!**

JOHNNY-- **NO!** YOU DON'T **UNDER-STAND!**

FRANKLY, REED-- NEITHER DO **I.** WHY ARE YOU--?

NO TIME TO **EXPLAIN--** BUT THE TORCH MUST BE **STOPPED!**

SUE, DARLING-- STAND BY WITH YOUR **OWN** POWERS!

WE MAY **NEED** THEM IN A MOMENT--

--IF **I** CAN'T DO-- WHAT'S **GOT TO BE DONE!**

WHA--? REED-- WHAT'S GOT **INTO** YOU? WHY'D YOU **GRAB** ME?

LET ME **GO!** I'M MELTING THAT BIG BABOON DOWN TO **ASHES...**

...AND NOTHING'S GONNA STOP ME --NOT EVEN **YOU!**

IT'S JUST AS I **FEARED!** JOHNNY **FLARED UP** AGAIN.

TOO **HOT** TO HOLD --EVEN WITH **ASBESTOS GLOVES!**

SUE-- YOU'VE GOT TO--

I--I **KNOW,** REED--

I'VE GOT TO **ENCLOSE** JOHNNY IN ONE OF MY INVISIBLE **FORCE-FIELDS--**

--BEFORE IT'S **TOO LATE!**

THERE! IT'S **DONE!**

BUT, REED--HIS **FLAME!** IT'LL EAT UP ALL THE **OXYGEN** INSIDE--WITHIN **SECONDS!**

THEN--HE WON'T BE ABLE TO **BREATHE--**

YET, IF I **RELEASE** HIM, HE'LL **FALL** BEFORE HE CAN FLAME ON--FALL ONTO THOSE **ROCKS--!**

AND--HE **STRUGGLED** SO HARD-- I'M ALREADY GETTING **WEAK!** I **CAN'T--**

HOLD ON, SUE! MY **LEFT** ARM MAY BE AS LIMP AS LAST NIGHT'S **NOODLES...**

...STILL...I NEVER WAS A *SOUTHPAW,* ANYWAY!

CAN'T *HOLD* HIM...ANY *LONGER...*

HURRY, REED! HURRRRYYYYYY

GOT HIM-- JUST *BARELY!!*

BUT...HE'S *BLACKED OUT...* AND I'M ON THE VERGE...OF DOING THE *SAME...!*

NO! I... I CAN'T... *MUSTN'T...* OR ELSE...

...WE'LL BE AT THE MERCY... OF THE MOLE MAN...!

AND THE MOLE MAN *HAS* NO MERCY, EH, REED RICHARDS? QUITE *RIGHT.*

HAH! LOOK AT THE FOUR OF THEM ON YONDER SCREEN, DEAR *KALA.*

YOUR PLAN WORKED NEARLY TO *PERFECTION,* BELOVED.

ARE THEY NOT A *SORRY* SAMPLING OF A SOON-EXTINCT *SPECIES?*

THE SO-CALLED *THING* IS PERHAPS ALREADY *DEAD,* AND AS FOR HIS WOULD-BE *RESCUERS...*

...THEY'LL SOON BE LIKEWISE, MY DOVE.

IN FACT, AFTER THE *MANNER* OF THE DOOMED UPPER-WORLD, I RATHER BELIEVE THIS CALLS FOR...A *TOAST!*

WHAT SHALL IT *BE,* MY SWEET?

WHY, *CHAMPAGNE,* OF COURSE...THE BUBBLY *PINK* KIND OF WHICH YOU'VE SUCH AN ABUNDANT SUPPLY.

AND WHY *NOT*-- WHEN NO *WINE CELLAR* ON EARTH IS SAFE FROM ONE WHO WALKS THE HOLLOW SPACES *BENEATH* THAT EARTH?

MY BETROTHED--ISN'T THAT THE ONE NAMED *TYRANNUS* WHO FETCHES WINE AND GLASSES HITHER?

OF *COURSE,* DEAR KALA.

WHO *ELSE* IS MORE FIT TO WAIT UPON THE FUTURE *RULERS* OF A PLANET...

...THAN HE WHO HAS BEEN HIMSELF A KING?

HARD TO **BELIEVE**, ISN'T IT, THAT THIS **HYPNOTIZED BOND-SLAVE** WAS ONCE MY HARD-FOUGHT **RIVAL** FOR SUPREMACY IN SUBTERRANIA.?

JUST AS **WE TWO** MIGHT HAVE BEEN RIVALS, DEAREST... IF WE'D NOT HAD THE GOOD SENSE TO **FALL IN LOVE** INSTEAD.

ONE GLASS IS ENOUGH, STEWARD. GO NOW, AND SAVE THE REST FOR THE **MARRIAGE FEAST.**

YES, GREAT ONE...

HMMM...OF COURSE, WHEN ONE HAS THE WINE CELLARS OF THE **WORLD** TO CHOOSE FROM...

...ONE CAN AFFORD TO **WASTE** A BIT OF THE BUBBLY, EH.?

WELL.? **LAUGH IT UP,** YOU BARGAIN-BASEMENT NAPOLEON!

OR DON'T YOU **LIKE** MY LITTLE JOKE.?

QU-**QUITE** HILARIOUS, MASTER....!

PLEASE...**FORGIVE** THIS ONE'S EXTREME **CLUMSINESS,** SIRE.

I SHALL DISPOSE OF THESE FRAGMENTS **FORTHWITH.**

A **RARE** JEST, BELOVED. STILL, I WAS JUST THINKING...TYRANNUS COULD BE OF GREAT **HELP** TO ME IN PREPARING FOR OUR FAST-APPROACHING **WEDDING...**

...IF **YOU** WOULD SO COMMAND HIM....?

WELLLLLL...

YOUR **WISH** IS EVER MY **DESIRE,** LOVELY ONE.

GO, LACKEY... AND PERFORM WHATEVER **TASKS** MY LADY SHALL ASSIGN TO YOU.!

YES, GREAT ONE.

COME, BOY....!

AND, IF THEY BE NOT DEAD **ALREADY,** THEN--

WHAT.?? NO!

IT CANNOT BE.!!

AS FOR **ME,** I MUST RETURN TO VIEWING THE SAD STATE OF MY FALLEN **FOEMEN...**

REED RICHARDS AND HIS ACCURSED ALLIES--

--ARE NOWHERE IN SIGHT!

BUT HOW? AND WHERE??

I HAVE HIDDEN VIEWERS IN EVERY PHOSPHORESCENTLY-LIGHTED TUNNEL WHICH LEADS FROM THEIR VEHICLE'S LANDING PLACE.

THERE IS NO ROOM FOR THEM TO HAVE HIDDEN FROM ME--AND THEY CANNOT BE GONE--

AND YET-- THEY ARE!

THEN GO, MY SUBTERRANEANS --WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? SEARCH EACH NOOK AND CRANNY IN THIS SECTOR!

AND DO NOT RETURN WITHOUT THE BODIES OF THE HATED INVADERS--

--IF YOU VALUE YOUR NIGH-MINDLESS HEADS!

THEY ARE DOLTS, ARE MY SUBJECTS... BUT USEFUL ENOUGH, FOR THEY LIVE ONLY TO SERVE THE MOLE MAN.

YET, IF THOSE SURFACE SWINE SOMEHOW GET PAST THEM--

IF, SOMEHOW, THEY DARE ACCOST ME IN MY OWN PALACE--

--THEN I'VE A QUITE SPECIAL SURPRISE FOR THEM!

YOU! COME HERE!

AH YES...A VERY SPECIAL SURPRISE INDEED--

--AND ONE THEY MIGHT LIVE NEARLY LONG ENOUGH TO REGRET!

SO SPEAKING, THE MACABRE MOLE MAN STOMPS OFF WITH HIS MYSTERIOUS UNDERLING, THRU THE DARK, DANK HALLS OF SUBTERRANIA.

FOR LONG MINUTES, THE VIEWSCREEN BEHIND REGISTERS NAUGHT BUT THE SIGHT OF A SHADOWED CLEARING... AND THE ABANDONED FANTASTI-CAR...

THEN, EVER SO SLOWLY...

...SOMETHING BEGINS TO HAPPEN!

REED! WE'RE-- BECOMING VISIBLE AGAIN!

IT'S BEEN LONG ENOUGH, JOHNNY, IT--SHOULD BE SAFE BY NOW--!

I ONLY HOPE OUR POPPING INTO SIGHT DOESN'T MEAN THAT SUE--

OH, THERE YOU ARE, HONEY--I WAS SO WORRIED FOR A MOMENT--

I...I WAS ALL RIGHT...SO LONG AS I BREATHED IN SHORT GASPS.

--AFRAID SOME HARM HAD COME TO YOU, WEDGED INTO THAT TIGHT CREVICE!

BUT, IT WAS SO CRAMPED... COULDN'T STAND THE MENTAL STRAIN OF KEEPING YOU THREE INVISIBLE... FOR ANOTHER SECOND!

WE'RE JUST LUCKY THAT CREVICE WAS HANDY--SINCE YOU CAN'T MAKE YOURSELF INVISIBLE AT THE SAME TIME YOU AFFECT OTHERS!

BUT--YOU WERE RIGHT, REED! THAT WAS NO MONSTER I WAS ATTACKING-- IT WAS BEN!

HOW DID YOU--?

LATER, SON...

IF MY JUDGEMENT OF THE MOLE MAN'S PSYCHE IS CORRECT, HE WAS PROBABLY OBSERVING US FROM SOMEWHERE...

BUT HE'S TOO IMPATIENT TO HAVE WATCHED AN EMPTY CLEARING FOR LONG!

STILL, JUST IN CASE HE DECIDES TO DROP IN--WE'D BETTER CLEAR OUT--

--WITH BEN!

REED--CAN YOU TELL IF BEN'S GONNA BE--*OKAY?*

IF I'VE REALLY *HURT* THAT UGLY GALOOT--I--I DON'T KNOW *WHAT* I'D--

THERE'S NO WAY WE CAN *TELL* ABOUT BEN...YET.

BUT, YOU MUSTN'T BLAME *YOURSELF,* KID...

IT WAS ALL THE *MOLE MAN'S* DOING!

UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS, HE USED SOME SORT OF *DEVICE* ON BEN THAT MADE *US* SEE HIM AS A *MONSTER!*

MOST LIKELY, IT EVEN *DESIGNED* HIS APPEARANCE TO BE ONE WHICH WOULD AROUSE *PRIMORDIAL ANGER* IN THE DEPTHS OF OUR MINDS!

BUT, REED--WHY DIDN'T IT WORK ON *YOU?*

BEN AND I GO BACK A *LONG WAY,* SUE. I KNOW THE WAY HE *TALKS*--THE WAY HE *MOVES*--!

THE DAY I DON'T RECOGNIZE *YOU* OR *BEN GRIMM*--IS THE DAY I APPLY FOR A *SEEING-EYE DOG!*

=UHHNN!= SHOULDN'T HAVE--*TALKED* SO MUCH.

BEN WEIGHS... HUNDREDS OF *POUNDS.* WINDED...

DON'T *SWEAT* IT, MAN. I'VE *GOT* YOU.

AND NOW *WE'LL* GET THE *MOLE MAN!*

YES--SOON AS I CATCH--MY *SECOND WIND.*

I CAN SEE--THAT BEN'S *BREATHING,* AT LEAST.

SUE, HONEY--YOU'LL *STAY HERE* WITH HIM--WHILE JOHNNY AND I--

NO!

WHAT--?

REED RICHARDS, IN MY OWN WAY *I* LOVE BEN GRIMM AS MUCH AS *YOU* DO--BUT WHY SHOULD *I* STAY BEHIND, INSTEAD OF *YOU?*

I'M A *WOMAN,* REED. THAT *DOESN'T* AUTOMATICALLY MAKE ME *SUE BARTON, STUDENT NURSE!*

IT *ISN'T* JUST THAT, DARLING--BUT THERE'S *DANGER* UP AHEAD, AND--

--AND I'VE *FACED* DANGER--AS OFTEN AS *YOU* HAVE, *MISTER* FANTASTIC!

ALRIGHT, YOU TWO --NOW *CUT IT!*

I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S *EATING* YOU TWO--AND IT'S NONE OF MY *BUSINESS*--

BUT WE'VE GOT MORE *IMPORTANT* THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT, LIKE *BEN,* AND--

FORGET ABOUT BEN...!

NOT A *CHANCE,* FELLA! NOW--*HUH?*

BEN--!?

SO WHO'D YOU *THINK* WAS CROAKIN' AT YA, SONNY-BOY?

FROGGY THE GREMLIN?

I BEEN LYIN' HERE *LISTENIN'* AT THE THREE'A YOU...

...WHILE YER TRYIN' TO DECIDE HOW TA DISPOSE OF THE *BODY...!*

WELL... THERE *AINT* NO BODY, SEE...?

THERE'S JUST *ME*... AN', I DON'T KNOW ABOUT *YOU* LOW-LIFERS...

BUT *I* CAME HERE TO GET ME THE *MOLE MAN...*

...AN' THAT'S *JUST* WHAT I AIM TA *DO!*

A FEW HURRIED *EXPLANATIONS*... A STAMMERED, UNCERTAIN *APOLOGY* OR TWO...

*T*HEN, THE FABULOUS FOURSOME SPLIT INTO *TWO* GROUPS... WITHOUT A WORD...

*A*ND, THOUGH IT *HURTS*... WITHOUT A *BACKWARD GLANCE!*

...SO *WE'RE* TAKING THE ROUTE *BEN* CAME, HUH...WHILE HE AND SUE TRY TO FIND A WAY AROUND *BACK* OF MOLE MAN'S STRONGHOLD!?

WILD. BUT, REED-- WHAT MAKES BEN THINK THAT CREEP CAN HELP CURE *ALICIA'S BLINDNESS*... JUST 'CAUSE HE'S DEVELOPED HIS OWN *RADAR SENSE* DOWN HERE?

HOPE, JOHNNY. NOTHING BUT *HOPE.*

AND, FOR *BEN'S* SAKE-- *WE'VE* GOT TO HOPE, TOO!

SURE WE DO-- BUT JUST THE SAME--*HUH?*

SUBTERRANEANS! THEY WERE LYING IN *WAIT*--AND NOW THEY'RE *CHARGING* US!

WELL, COME AND *GET* US, FELLAS...

...IF YOU REALLY THINK YOU'RE *UP* TO IT!

FWAP

IT'S UNCANNY-- *EERIE!* THEY'RE *SILENT*-- AND NOT AMAZINGLY *STRONG*--

BUT THERE MUST BE *DOZENS* OF THEM-- *HUNDREDS*--

--AND THEY KEEP *COMING!*

AND AS LONG AS THEY *DO*, BROTHER-IN-LAW...

--I'LL GO RIGHT ON *ZAPPING* 'EM!

BRAKK!

THAT'S THE *TICKET*, HOT-PANTS!

KEEP ON ACTING LIKE YOU'RE THE GREAT WHITE HOPE OF THE *SUPER-HERO* SET!

SURE, YOU CAN FORM A BLAZING *LASSO* FROM THE VERY *AIR* ITSELF...

--AND *SURE*, YOU STILL TOSS THE NEATEST *LARIAT* THIS SIDE OF *WILL ROGERS!*

BUT YOUR FANCY-DAN FLAMES WON'T LAST *FOREVER!*

WHAT HAPPENS *THEN*, BIG-MOUTH?

JOHNNY--SUE WAS *RIGHT!* I'M *WEAK*-- TOO TIRED TO *STRETCH*, TO *FIGHT* ANY MORE

YOU'VE GOT TO BAIL US OUT OF THIS MESS--OR WE'RE *FINISHED!*

I'LL--DO WHAT I *CAN*, REED!

BUT *WHAT? WHAT??*

THE DESPERATE QUESTION HOVERS, WRAITH-LIKE, IN THE MUSTY CAVERN AIR! MEANWHILE...

BEN--LOOK! WE'VE FOUND IT!

DOWN THERE--THAT MUST BE THE MOLE MAN'S STRONGHOLD!

EITHER THAT, SUZIE BABY... OR IT'S THE SUBTERRANIA-HILTON...

THIS IS NO TIME FOR JOKING, BEN.

...IN WHICH CASE, I WANT ME A ROOM WITH A HOT SHOWER!

I BEG TA DIFFER WITH YA, LADY.

WHEN YER KNEES AINT KNOCKIN' TOGETHER LIKE CASTANETS--THAT'S THE TIME YOU DON'T NEED TO MAKE WITH THE MIRTH.

GUESS I'M JUST SCARED OF WHAT I MIGHT FIND OUT IN THERE--ABOUT ALICIA--ABOUT HER CHANCES OF EVER SEEIN' AGAIN--ABOUT--

AW... I TALK TOO MUCH.

C'MON, SUZIE BABY... LET'S FIND OUT IF THIS IS REALLY MOLEY'S HANGOUTS...

I ASSURE YOU, MY FRIEND... IT IS FAR MORE THAN A MERE ICE CREAM PARLOUR.

...OR JUST ANOTHER HOWARD JOHNSON'S! I'M GONNA--

HUH.? WHOZZAT.?

BEN--BEHIND US--!

THE REVEREND JOSIAH MANDIZ, AT YOUR SERVICE, FRIENDS.

NOW, IF YOU'LL PLEASE BE AT MINE...

AND SET ME FREE FROM THIS DEN OF INIQUITY...?

WELL--YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE ONE OF THE SUBTERRANEANS, THAT'S FOR SURE...

AS I SAID, MA'AM... THE REVEREND JOSIAH MANDIZ.

NOW, IF YOU'LL ONLY--

BENDIN' BARS IS MORE UP MY ALLEY, MISTER.

AN' I DON'T MIND GETTIN' YOU OUT...

...EVEN IF YOU DO TURN OUT TO BE ONE'A THE MOLE MAN'S STOOGES...

...'CAUSE, WHAT I'M DOIN'...TO THESE *STEEL BARS*... I COULD DO JUST AS EASY...

KKRREE

--TO *YOU!!*

EAAKKK!

UNNHH! I DUNNO, SUZIE--THAT *BROTHER* OF YOURS MUST'A ZONKED ME WORSE'N I *THOUGHT.*

FEEL KINDA *DIZZY*-- THINGS SPINNIN' AROUND--!

BEN-- MAYBE WE SHOULD *TURN BACK!* MAYBE--

NOT A *CHANCE,* LADY. I'LL BE...OKAY.

SEE? I'M... GOOD AS *NEW* AGAIN.

NOW, REV... SUPPOSIN' YOU TELL US WHAT *YOU'RE* DOIN' AT THIS LITTLE CLAMBAKE!

I--I'M NOT *CERTAIN,* ACTUALLY.

I WAS LECTURING IN MY *PARISH,* WHEN SUDDENLY THOSE *YELLOW CREATURES* CAPTURED ME.

REV, THAT STORY SOUNDS AS FULL OF FISH AS A *TUNA-BOAT!*

EVER SINCE THEN, I'VE BEEN HELD *INCOMMUNI-CADO.*

BEN--FOR HEAVEN'S *SAKE--!*

AWRIGHT, WOMAN-- IF *YOU* WANNA BELIEVE THE MOLE MAN JUST YANKED MR. MILQUETOAST DOWN HERE FOR NO GOOD REASON, *GO AHEAD!*

ME, I GOT *BETTER* THINGS TA DO-- *WITH* YA, OR *WITHOUT* YA!

THINGS LIKE... SPOTTIN' OL' *EAGLE-BEAK* HIMSELF... *UP AHEAD!*

KEEP IT *DOWN,* SUE. THIS COULD BE THE *PAY-OFF.*

YOU MISBEGOTTEN, MISERABLE, MISSHAPEN *MALCREANTS--!*

YOUR *SOVEREIGN,* IN CASE YOU HAVE FAILED TO NOTICE, IS SORE *DISPLEASED* WITH THE LOT OF YOU!

YOU HAVE *FAILED* TO LOCATE AND INCARCERATE THE *ENEMIES* WHO BESET HIM!

FOR *THAT,* YOU MUST BE SEVERELY *CHASTIZED!*

DO NOT DEAL WITH THEM *TOO* HARSHLY, MY BELOVED.

AFTER ALL, THE SO-CALLED FANTASTIC FOUR ARE DOUBTLESS BADLY *WOUNDED*--AND CAN HARM US *LITTLE.*

BESIDES, YOUR MINIONS ARE *NECESSARY*--TO COMPLETE OUR WORLD-DESTROYING *SHAFTS!*

AS *ALWAYS,* YOUR COOL WORDS *SOOTHE* MY RIGHTEOUS ANGER.

MORE: YOUR MENTION OF OUR FAST-APPROACHING *CONQUEST* HAS REMINDED ME...

...OF THE *WEDDING GIFT* I HAVE PREPARED FOR YOU.

COME, MY DEAR...

YOU *SEE?* A SPECIALLY-DESIGNED NEW *MAGMA-CRUISER,* WHOSE NAME INDICATES WHAT IT WILL *DO*--

NAMELY, BORE THRU EITHER THE EARTH'S BRITTLE *CRUST*--OR EVEN ITS *MOLTEN CORE!*

IN IT, *TOGETHER,* WE SHALL *SURVEY* OUR VICTORY--A FEW SCANT *HOURS* FROM NOW.

YES, DEAREST... WHEN *YOU AND I* ARE ONE...WHEN OUR *KINGDOMS* ARE ONE...

THE *MOLE MAN* AND HIS *KALA*--KING AND QUEEN OF A DESECRATED *PLANET!*

WEDDING? SURE--*THAT'S* IT--

OL' MOLE-FACE MUST'A BROUGHT THE *REVEREND* HERE TO *MARRY* HIM AN' KALA--ALL *LEGAL*-LIKE!

LOOKS LIKE I *OWE* YA ONE, REV.

THAT IS HARDLY *NECESSARY,* SIR. I--

OH, DEAR!

KRASH!!

WHAT WAS *THAT??*

SUBTERRANEANS --INVESTIGATE THAT SOUND AT *ONCE!*

TELL 'EM TO REST THEIR *TOOTSIES,* HANDSOME!

THE *THING* IS OUTTA THE MOOD FOR PLAYIN' *HIDE-AN'-SEEK!*

SEIZE THEM! DESTROY THEM!!

ANY SEIZIN' TO BE DONE AROUND HERE, I'LL DO IT!

ONLY THING IS, I WOULDN'T TOUCH YOU CRUD-HEADS--

--WITH A TEN-FOOT MOLE!

SMA

ASH

MY SUBTERRANEANS MIGHT SUBDUE THE INTRUDERS IN TIME-- BUT I AM IMPATIENT. THUS--

YOU, ANDROID-- YOU WHO COMBINE THE GENIUS OF THE MOLE MAN WITH THE TECHNOLOGY OF KALA'S NETHERWORLD--

ANNIHILATE THE THING!!

YOU FORGOT, MOLE MAN, ABOUT THE ERSTWHILE INVISIBLE GIRL!

MY MENTAL FORCE FIELD OUGHT TO PUT THAT WHATEVER-IT-IS OUT OF COMMISSION.

UH OH! JUST ONE FLAW IN MY BEST-LAID PLANS, I SEE...

...THE ANDROID WON'T PLAY DEAD!

IT'S NO USE, MY GOOD WOMAN. RUN, BEFORE--

NEVER FEAR, GUINEVERE--

'CAUSE YER OWN PERSONAL SIR LANCELOT, IS HERE!

BEN--NO! YOU'VE BEEN WEAKENED TOO MUCH! YOU CAN'T--

SUZIE'S RIGHT, BLAST IT! ALL I DID WUZ LAND ON THE BOTTOM WHEN WE HIT THE FLOOR--

--UNDERNEATH A CREEP THAT WEIGHS A MEASLY TON OR TWO--

--AN' IT HURTS!

KA-UU-MP!

BUT--WHERE DO YOU COME OFF--FEELING *SORRY* FOR YERSELF, GRIMM?

YER DOIN' --ALL THIS-- FOR *ALICIA*, REMEMBER?

YEAH--

--FOR ALICIA!

SWA

AN' *NOW*, LITTLE BUDDY--YER GONNA LEARN WHAT *CLOBBERIN' TIME* REALLY *MEANS--!*

I FEAR *NOT*, MY MIS-ANTHROPIC FRIEND.

FOR, AS YOU CAN PLAINLY SEE, I'VE ENVELOPED *MRS. RICHARDS* IN A BUBBLE OF *PURE ENERGY.*

ONE MORE STEP, AND I SHALL *CONTRACT* IT--INSTANTLY *KILLING* HER.

WHY YOU *CRUMMY--*

THERE IS, PERHAPS, SOMETHING IN WHAT YOU *SAY.*

STILL, I NOTICE YOU HAVE *INDEED* HALTED IN YOUR TRACKS...

...FREEING *ME* TO MAKE YOUR IMMOBILIZATION, SHALL WE SAY... MORE *PERMANENT!*

NOW, WHEN YOUR TWO *REMAINING* COMRADES ARE LOCATED...

WELL NOW... WHAT HAVE WE *HERE?*

A HANDFUL OF MY *MINIONS* ARRIVING--WITH A CAPTURED *HUMAN TORCH!*

AND, A FEW SIMPLE WORDS OF *SIGN LANGUAGE* SUFFICE TO TELL ME THAT THE VAUNTED *MR. FANTASTIC* IS--*DEAD!*

THEN--I'VE *DONE* IT, AT LAST! I HAVE DEFEATED--*DESTROYED* THE SO-CALLED *FANTASTIC FOUR--*

--AND THE WORLD IS MINE--TO SLAY AT WILL!

I'VE WON! I'VE WON!

AND I'VE--*LOST!* LOST... *EVERY-THING...!*

WHIMPER ALL YOU *WISH*, DEAR LADY.

NOTHING CAN POSSIBLY MAR FOR ME THIS DAY OF *NUPTIAL*--

WHAT--?

ENERGY RINGS-- ENCOMPASSING ME-- RENDERING ME *HELPLESS!* BUT *WHO*--?

KALA, MY BELOVED! COME TO THE *AID* OF YOUR MAN!

MAN? WHY, YOU GROTESQUE *PARODY* OF ALL THAT IS *BEAUTIFUL*--

IT IS *TYRANNUS* WHOM I TRULY DESIRE-- *TYRANNUS* WHO ALONE CAN MATCH *MY* PERFECTION WITH HIS *OWN.*

WELL SAID, MY DEAR. AND AGAIN, MY *THANKS*...

...FOR *FREEING* ME FROM THE MOLE MAN'S SPELL, SO THAT WE MAY RULE THE UNDER-GROUND *TOGETHER!*

BUT, *KALA*-- YOU SAID YOU *LOVED* ME--!

POOR, MISGUIDED FOOL! I ALMOST FEEL *SORRY* FOR YOU!

DID YOU REALLY THINK I WANTED *AUGHT* FROM YOU--BUT THE COMMAND OF YOUR STUPIDLY LOYAL *SUBTERRANEANS?*

I--I *TRUSTED* YOU, KALA...

ALL THE *MORE* REASON WHY I SHOULD *DESPISE* YOU FOR YOUR NAIVETY.

BAH! I'VE WASTED *WORDS ENOUGH* ON THAT DISMAL DWARF.

SLAY HIM, MY BELOVED...

IN FACT--STRIKE DOWN *ALL* OF THE UPPER-AIR INVADERS!

THEN, WE SHALL ACTIVATE THE *DEATH-SHAFTS*-- AND *DOOM* THE WORLD THEY CAME FROM!

WELL, TYRANNUS? WHY ARE YOU *WAITING?*

WHY? MERELY SO THAT I COULD *STEP AWAY* FROM YOU, DEAR KALA... TO DO *THIS!*

NO! TYRANNUS, YOU--YOU'RE *TURNING* ON ME-- IMPRISONING *ME*, AS WELL!

BUT--*WHY?!?* WE WERE *MEANT* FOR EACH OTHER, YOU AND I--!

VAINGLORIOUS WENCH! *NO ONE* WAS *MEANT* TO RULE BY TYRANNUS' SIDE!

NO ONE IS *GOOD* ENOUGH-- *BRILLIANT* ENOUGH--*BEAUTIFUL* ENOUGH FOR THAT!

TYRANNUS *SHARES* HIS NIGHT-DARK THRONE-- WITH *NONE!*

YOU ARE INDEED A *PITIFUL* SPECIMEN, TYRANNUS, FOR *ALL* YOUR GOOD LOOKS!

TRUE, WHILE YOU SPOKE, I WAS UNABLE TO *FREE* MYSELF FROM YOUR ENERGY-RINGS.

BUT, THERE ARE THOSE THAT *I* HAVE BOUND--

AND THOSE, I *CAN* FREE--

--LIKE *SO!*

HE *DID* IT!

THE SONUVAGUN REALLY *DID* IT!

SO NOW IT'S *OUR* TURN TO DO SOME-THINGS--LIKE, *FLAME ON!*

OKAY, PRETTY-BOY...STEP RIGHT UP FOR A *KNUCKLE-BURGER!*

NO, FOOL! *YOU* TAKE ONE STEP MORE...

AND I'LL TURN YOU INTO RANDOM *ATOMS*--A DISTINCT PHYSICAL *IMPROVEMENT,* I MIGHT ADD.

NOT *NICE,* MR. T.!

YOU SHOULD KNOW BY NOW HOW *SENSITIVE* THE THING IS!

WH--? *WHO--?*

BEN--*LOOK!* IT'S--*REED!*

I *SEE* 'IM, SUZIE-- I *SEE* 'IM! BUT *HOW--?*

--DID I SNEAK INTO THE MOLE MAN'S VERY *STRONGHOLD?*

YOU TELL HIM, JOHNNY! BEN ALWAYS MAINTAINS I USE TOO MANY *BIG WORDS.*

YOU'RE *ON,* REED...

*"MOLEY'S **SUBTERRANEANS** WERE ATTACKING US--THREATENING TO **OVER-WHELM** US--WHEN REED SUDDENLY HAD ME TRY A **NEW** PLOY--*

REED--IT'S *WORKING!*

THEY'RE NOT *USED* TO MUCH *LIGHT--*

--AND THESE *LIGHT PATTERNS* YOU HAD ME TRY--ARE *HYPNOTIZING* THEM!

*EXCELLENT, JOHNNY. NOW, A BIT OF **FACE** AND **BODY-MOLDING** ON MY OWN PART...*

*...PLUS THE ADDITION OF A BIT OF **SKIN DYE** I THOUGHT MIGHT COME IN HANDY...*

AND *PRESTO CHANGO*-- INSTANT *SUBTERRANEAN!*

NOW LET'S GET *CRACKING!* WE HAVEN'T MUCH *TIME!*

"*THAT'S ABOUT IT, BLUE-EYES. ANY MORE QUESTIONS?*"

I HOPE NOT, JOHNNY --'CAUSE FRANKLY, I'VE JUST ABOUT *HAD* IT WITH THIS PLACE.

I'LL JUST DEPOSIT TYRANNUS FOR *SAFE-KEEPING,* AND WE CAN--

SURFACE-CRAWLING *DOLT!*

DID YOU THINK TYRANNUS HAD *NO* RESOURCES OF HIS *OWN?*

ELECTRI-BLAST-- OPERATED FROM HIS *BELT!*

CAN'T-- *HOLD ON--!*

NO MAN IS LONG THE MASTER OF *TYRANNUS!*

AND THE MOLE MAN'S OWN *MAGMA-CRUISER* SHALL BE MY MEANS OF *ESCAPE!*

DON'T KNOW IF I CAN STOP HIM WITH A *FIREBALL,* BUT I'VE GOTTA--

NO!

LET HIM *FLEE,* DO YOU HEAR ME? *LET HIM GO!!*

JOHNNY--I KNOW THIS SOUNDS *INSANE,* BUT--

DO AS HE SAYS!

OKAY, REED-- BUT I HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE *DOIN'!*

'CAUSE THERE HE *GOES,* AND--

FOOM!

YOU *SEE?* THE SHIP WAS *BOOBY-TRAPPED*-- WITH DEVICES WHICH ONLY *I* COULD DISMANTLE.

Y'MEAN YOU DIDN'T EVEN TRUST YOUR OWN *BRIDE-TO-BE?* WHY YOU *CRUMMY*--

STOP, TORCH!

HE'S SUFFERED *ENOUGH.*

SEZ *YOU,* STRETCHO! AINT YOU FERGOT WHY *I* CAME DOWN HERE IN THE *FIRST* PLACE?

...YOU AINT SEEN *NUTHIN'* YET!

IF MOLEY HERE DON'T TELL ME HOW TO CURE *ALICIA'S BLINDNESS...*

NO-- *PLEASE!* I--I HAVE *NO* CURE FOR BLINDNESS!

IF--IF I DID, I'D HAVE USED IT-- ON *MYSELF!*

*LIKE WE SAID ON OUR EVER-LOVIN' BULLPEN PAGE--**PLEASE** DON'T TELL ANYBODY WHAT **F.O.O.M.** MEANS...OKAY? -- STAN AND ROY.

I...DUNNO *WHY...* BUT I *BELIEVE* YA.

MEBBE IT'S BECAUSE...I ALWAYS *KNEW* IT'D PROB'LY END THIS WAY.

SPLOMP!

THEN, BACK TO THE *FANTASTI-CAR!* WE'VE ONLY GOT A *FEW MINUTES.*

I'VE *ALTERED* THE SEQUENCE ON THESE *SHAFT CONTROLS* ...SO THAT NOT EVEN THE *MOLE MAN* CAN CHANGE THEM BACK!

EVERY-BODY OUT OF THE *POOL!*

THE MAN *MEANS* IT!

THAT MEANS *YOU,* TOO, REVEREND MANDIS.

*MERE MINUTES LATER, A GLEAMING **KNIFE** CUTS THRU THE TWILIGHT GLOOM OF SUBTERRANIA...*

*...THEN ARCS **VERTICALLY** UP A STEEP, DARK TUNNEL TOWARD **HOME**...*

...NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON!

BLAM!

THE EARTH WILL NEVER KNOW HOW *CLOSE* IT CAME TO *DESTRUCTION*-- FROM A WORLD BENEATH ITS VERY *FEET.*

A PENNY FOR YOUR *THOUGHTS,* MRS. RICHARDS.

THEY...WOULDN'T BE *WORTH* THAT MUCH, REED.

I WAS JUST THINKING THAT, THOUGH BEN'S MISSION WAS A *FAILURE...*

...HE CAN STILL RETURN TO THE ARMS OF *ALICIA...* THE GIRL WHO *LOVES* HIM.

WHILE, THE *MOLE MAN...*

*"...THOUGH HE MAY RULE A VAST **EMPIRE**...AN UN-SPEAKING **MULTITUDE** OF FAITHFUL, FAWNING **SLAVES**...*

*"...CAN ONLY BE REMEMBER-ING THAT HE **LOVED A WOMAN** ...THAT SHE **MOCKED** HIM... **BETRAYED** HIM...*

*"...AND THAT HE WILL ALWAYS BE...**ALONE.**"*

*NEXT: **THE FRIGHTFUL FOUR.. PLUS ONE!***

THIS IS IT!!

AS A SPECIAL BLOCK-BUSTING **BONUS**--FROM **MARVEL** TO **YOU**--
STAN, ROY, AND **BIG JOHN BUSCEMA** PROUDLY PRESENT A VIRTUAL **GALAXY** OF...

THE FABULOUS F.F.'S FRIENDS--AND FOES!!

PREEEE-SENTING: **DOCTOR DOOM!**

THE F.F.'S MOST MALEVOLENT, MOST POWERFUL ENEMY!
LORD OF LATVERIA--
AND
MASTER OF MENACE!

THEIR VERY **FIRST** ADVERSARY:
AND, IN **THIS** CORNER:
THE MYSTERIOUS
MOLE MAN!

FRIENDS--OR FOES? CAN ANY MAN TRULY SAY??

THE EVER-INCREDIBLE HULK--
SURELY THE MIGHTIEST MAN-LIKE CREATURE ON EARTH!

PRINCE NAMOR--THE SUB-MARINER!
(WHO ELSE?)

THE SKY-RIDING SILVER SURFER!
PERHAPS THE MOST TOTALLY UNIQUE MARVEL SUPER-STAR OF ALL!

--NOT TO MENTION WORLD-DEVOURING GALACTUS--
BOTH MAN AND GOD, TOWERING ABOVE MERE GOOD AND EVIL!

NOW HERE'S A QUARRELSOME QUARTET! (BETCHA CAN'T HATE JUST ONE!!)

SHAKE HANDS WITH: THE FRIGHTFUL FOUR!

THE TERRIBLE TRAPSTER!
--NÉE PASTE-POT PETE!
(AND DO YOU BLAME THE GUY FOR CHANGIN' HIS NAME?)

MAGNIFICENT MEDUSA!
AN INHUMAN BORN--SHE WHOSE CRIMSON TRESSES ARE HER STRENGTH--HER SALVATION!

MEET--THE WIZARD!
HIS BRAIN--MAN'S FINEST--HIS MIND--MAN'S FOREMOST--AND HIS POWER--HIS OVER-WEENING EGO--HIS WEAKNESS!

THE SINISTER SAND-MAN!

THE EX-SPIDER-MAN! THE HULK! YOU NAME 'EM--HE'LL TAKE 'EM ON!!

NOW THAT MEDUSA HAS LEFT THEIR SERRIED RANKS, THIS ONCE-FEARFUL FOURSOME HAS BECOME A TRIO! BUT, ANYBODY WANNA BET THEY WON'T RECRUIT A FOURTH ONE OF THESE DAYS? AND THEN--
WORLD, WATCH OUT!

AND, LAST BUT NOT LEAST: THE UNCANNY INHUMANS!

BLACK BOLT!

SILENT, SUPER-POWERED SOVEREIGN OF THE GREAT REFUGE--AND BELOVED OF MEDUSA!

ON YOUR LEFT:

KARNAK THE SHATTERER!

--AND THE EXQUISITE ELEMENTAL CALLED CRYSTAL!

AND, ON YOUR RIGHT:

TRITON!

MOST AMAZING AMPHIBIAN THIS SIDE OF THE SUB-MARINER! AND--

GORGON--

HE WHOSE THUNDEROUS TREAD CAN SHAKE A WORLD!

WITH A GALAXY OF SUPPORTING STARS LIKE THESE, IS IT ANY WONDER WE STILL CALL THE F.F....

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIX MAG!!

Cover to 1971's all-reprint *The Fantastic Four Annual #9*

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NO! YOU CAN'T HAVE TURNED AGAINST US!
NOT YOU!
WHY NOT-- WHEN CRYSTAL IS THE MOST POWERFUL INHUMAN OF ALL!!
THUNDER IN THE RUINS
THE THING FIGHTS ALONE!

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T'CHALLA'S CHAINED UP IN THERE--- AND WE'RE GONNA GET HIM OUT!
YOU BETTER BELIEVE IT, HOT-HEAD---
..'CAUSE IT'S CLOBBERING TIME!!
THREE STAND TOGETHER .. OR DIE!

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STOP HIM! STOP HIM! NO MATTER WHAT!
IT'S NO USE! HE'S TOO STRONG!
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WHO IS HE? WHAT IS HE ?
WHY? WHY? WHY HAS HE CAPTURED SUE STORM?
THE RETURN OF THE MONSTER!

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WAIT AND SEE, SIS!
THE FANTASTIC FOUR HAVE ONLY BEGUN TO FIGHT!
YOU KIDS CAN'T DO IT ALONE!
IT'S TIME FOR THE THING TO LEND A HAND!
NOT WITHOUT MR. FANTASTIC, YOU DON'T!
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THE CREATURE FROM THE EARTH'S CORE!

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--AND YOU HAVE FOUND HIM!
IN A WORLD WHERE THE SUN DARES NOT SHINE--
THE THING FIGHTS ALONE!

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FANTASTIC FOUR
LET ME GO, REED! I'VE GOT TO DESTROY IT! I'VE GOT TO!
REED! IT-- IT'S TOO LATE! HE'S NOT BREATHING!!
NO, TORCH-- STOP! IT'S BEN YOU'RE ATTACKING!
IT'S BEN!!
FREE BONUS! FOUR BIG EXTRA PAGES OF FULL-COLOR PIN-UPS!
DIVIDED .. WE FALL!

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